PARENTAL ADVISDRY
EXPLICIT
CONTENT

Blue Morning

Story and Art by Shoko Hidaka

volume 5

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Still reeling from Katsuragi's confession, Akihito attends Marquise Moriyama's evening ball. There he comes face-to-face with his late father's half-brother Naotsugu. Though Katsuragi arranged the meeting with the intention of helping both Akihito and the Kuze family name, Akihito decides against giving the family over to Naotsugu, bringing Akihito to the unsettling realization that he may not fully trust Katsuragi. Meanwhile, Katsuragi meets with Marquise Moriyama and boldly demands recompense for all that he has done.

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Shoko Hidaka Presents

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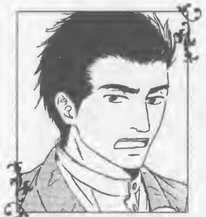
scene.21

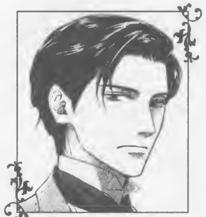
Blue Morning: Scene 21

Characters



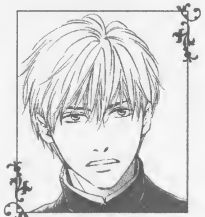
Soichiro Ishizaki

Akihito's close friend who also gives him painful advice at times. He likes Akihito, who is critical of the nobility, but it's hard for him to accept Akihito's relationship with Katsuragi.



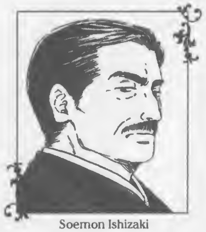
Tomoyuki Katsuragi

A very capable butler who will use any means when it comes to protecting the Kuze family. Although drawn to Akihito, who yearns for him wholeheartedly, he left the Kuze house and is head clerk for the Ishizakis.



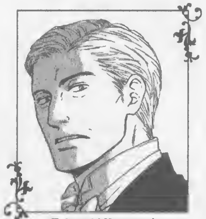
Akihito Kuze

The young head of the family, having succeeded the viscountcy at the tender age of ten. Straightforward and wise, but also very determined. He has loved his butler/tutor Katsuragi since childhood.



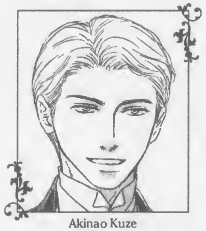
Soemon Ishizaki

Soichiro's father, he is a merchant who built a fortune in a generation. Recognizing Katsuragi's talent, he selected him as head clerk.



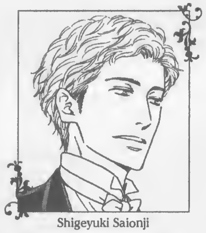
Takayuki Katsuragi

The head of the Katsuragi family, a Kuze branch family. He despises his youngest brother, Tomoyuki, but he pays Akihito the respect he is due as the head of the main family.



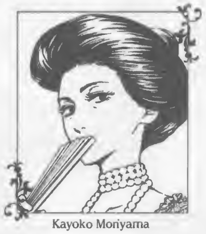
Akinao Kuze

The former head of the Kuze family and Akihito's deceased father. He took in Katsuragi, who was not his legitimate child, to inherit his title and gave him a special education. A very proud man, he focused mainly on family status.



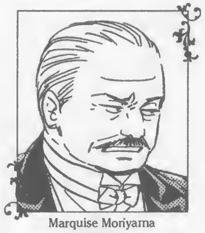
Shigeyuki Saionji

The heir to a declining marquessate, he adores Katsuragi and is another of his former lovers. With Katsuragi's assistance, he married the eldest daughter of the Moriyama house.



Kayoko Moriyama

Originally from a merchant family, she is now Marquise Moriyama's wife and Katsuragi's former lover.

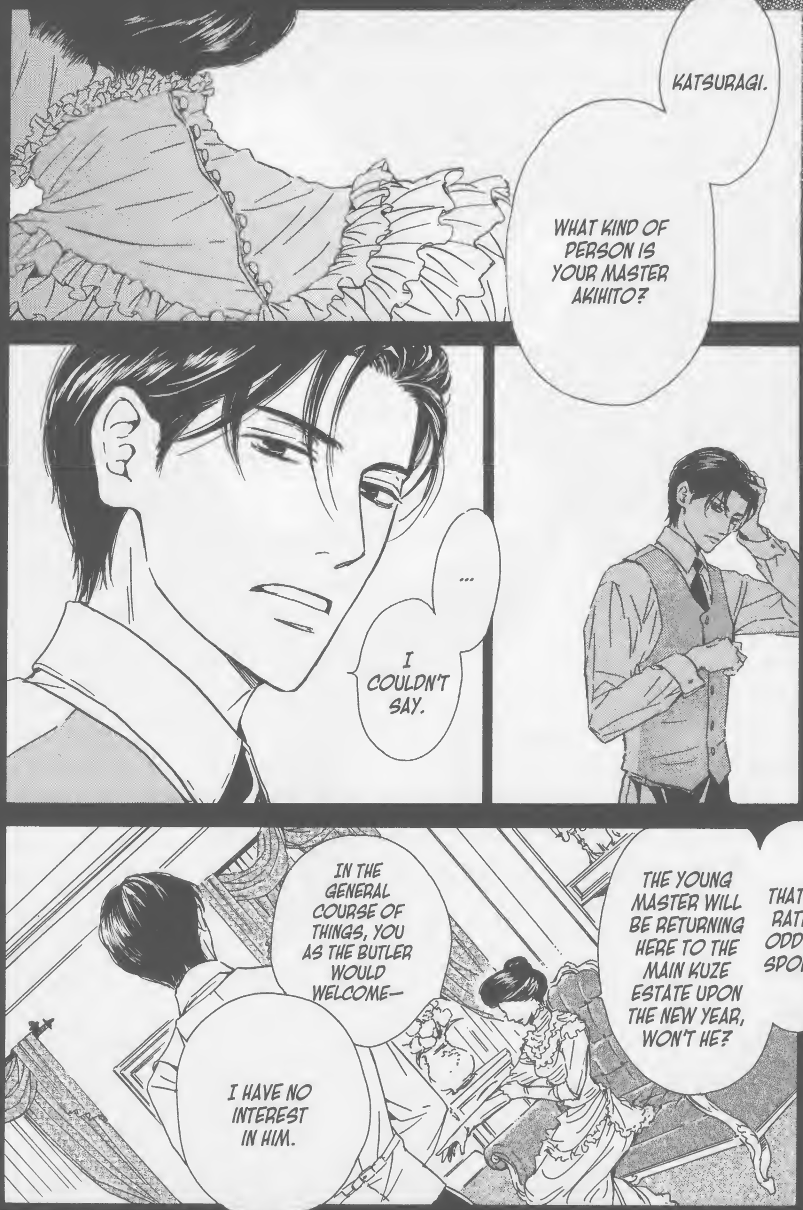


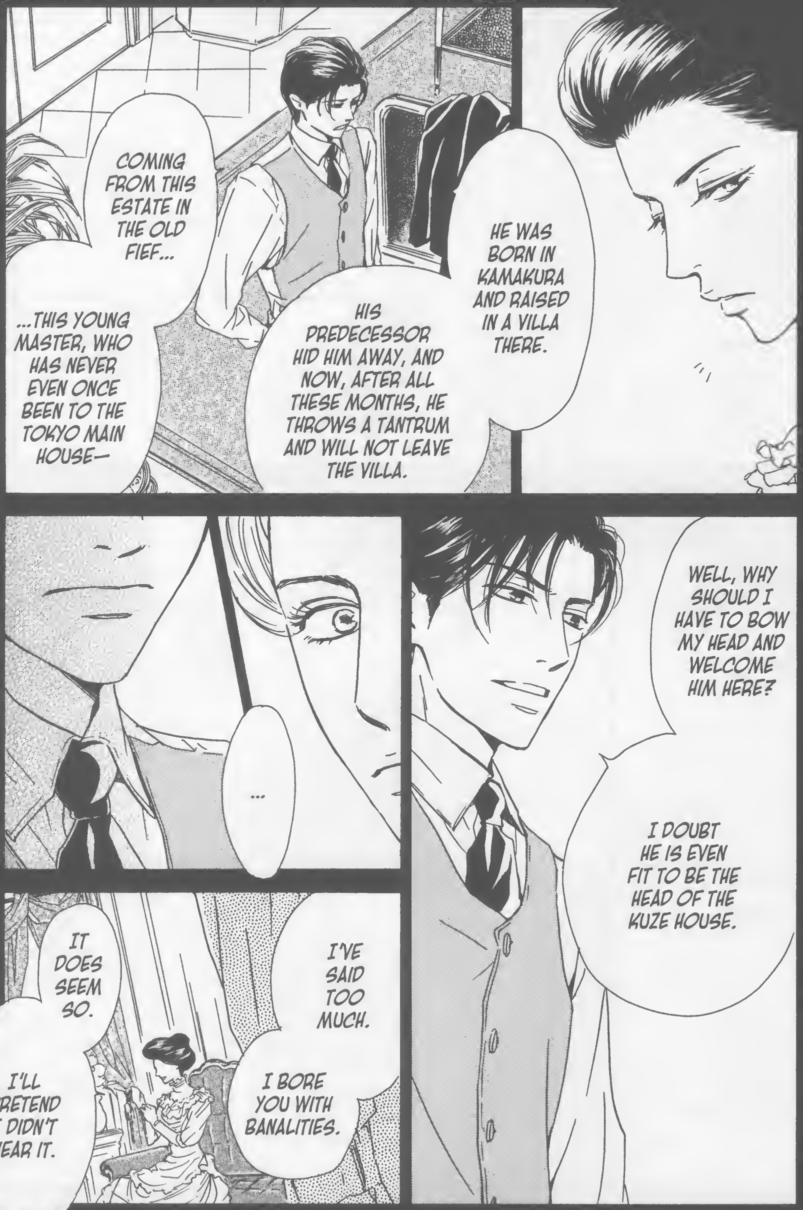
Marquise Moriyama

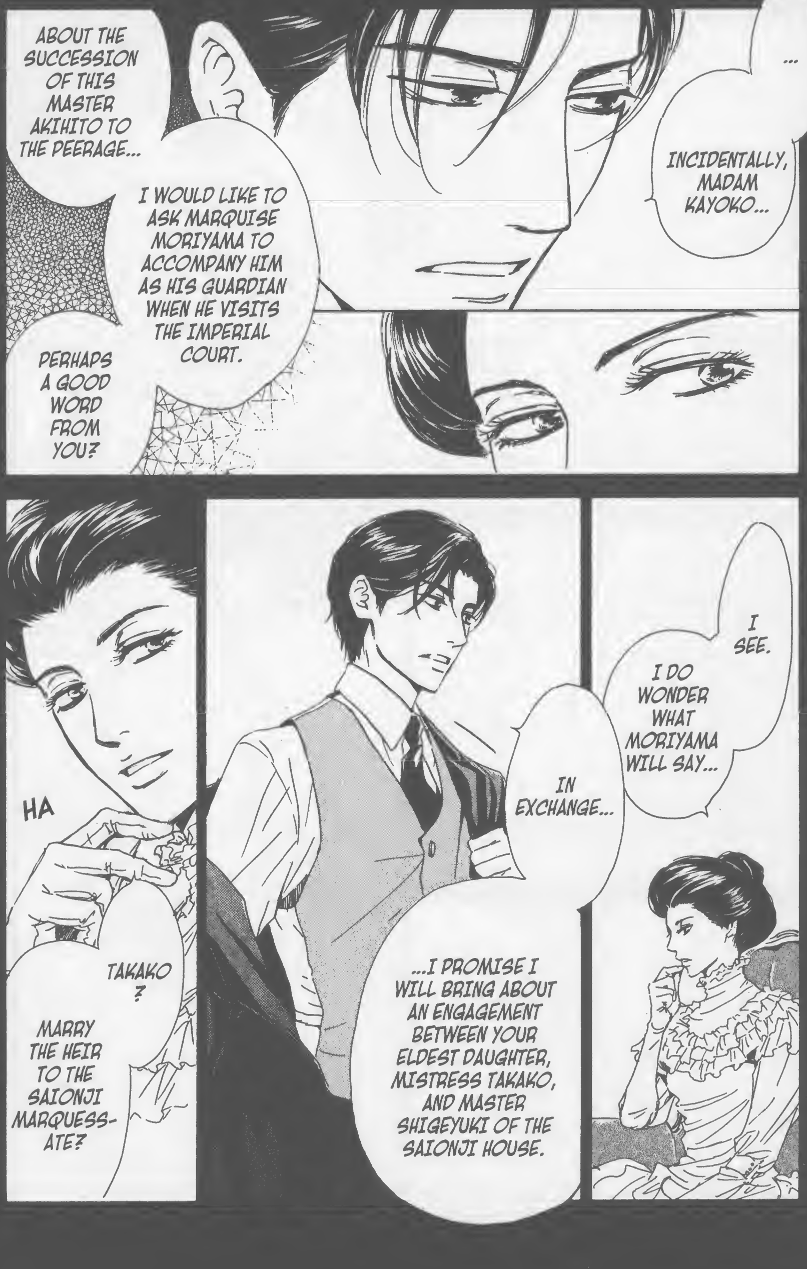
He's a powerful man with the most influence in noble society, but his thinking is antiquated and oppressive.

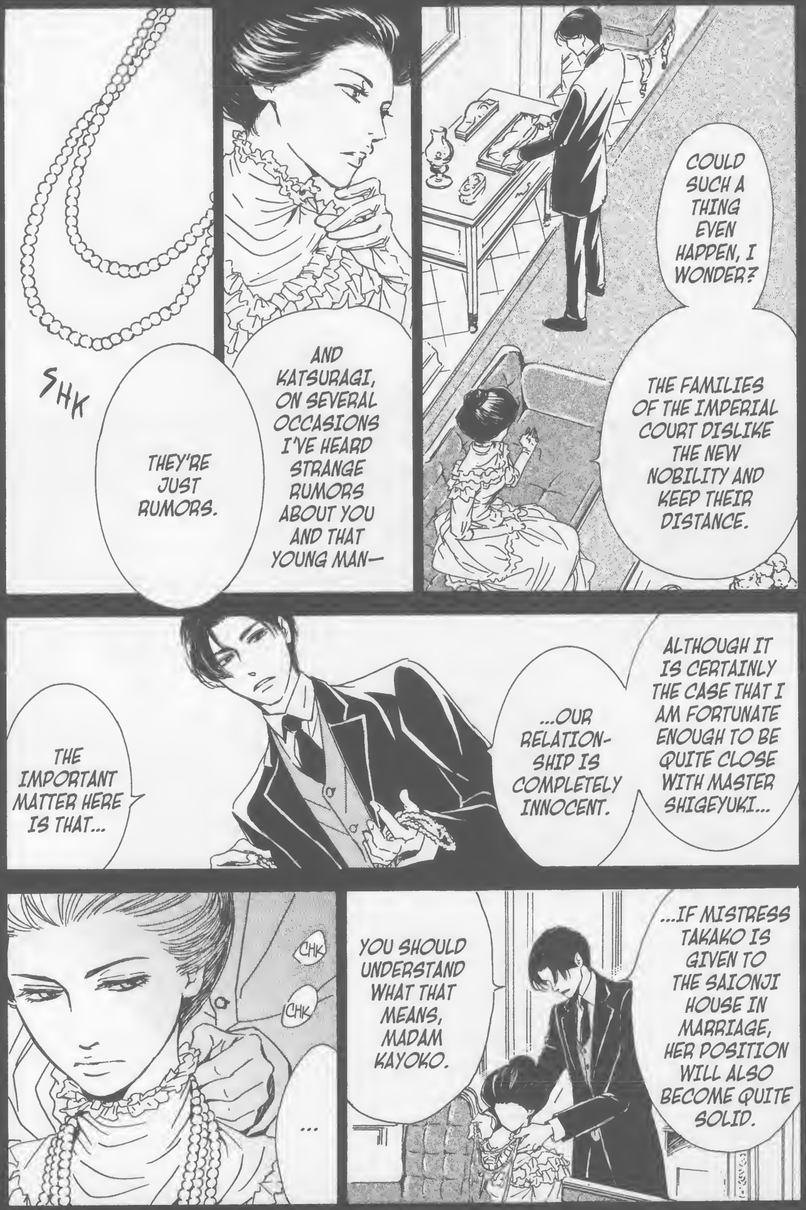
Story

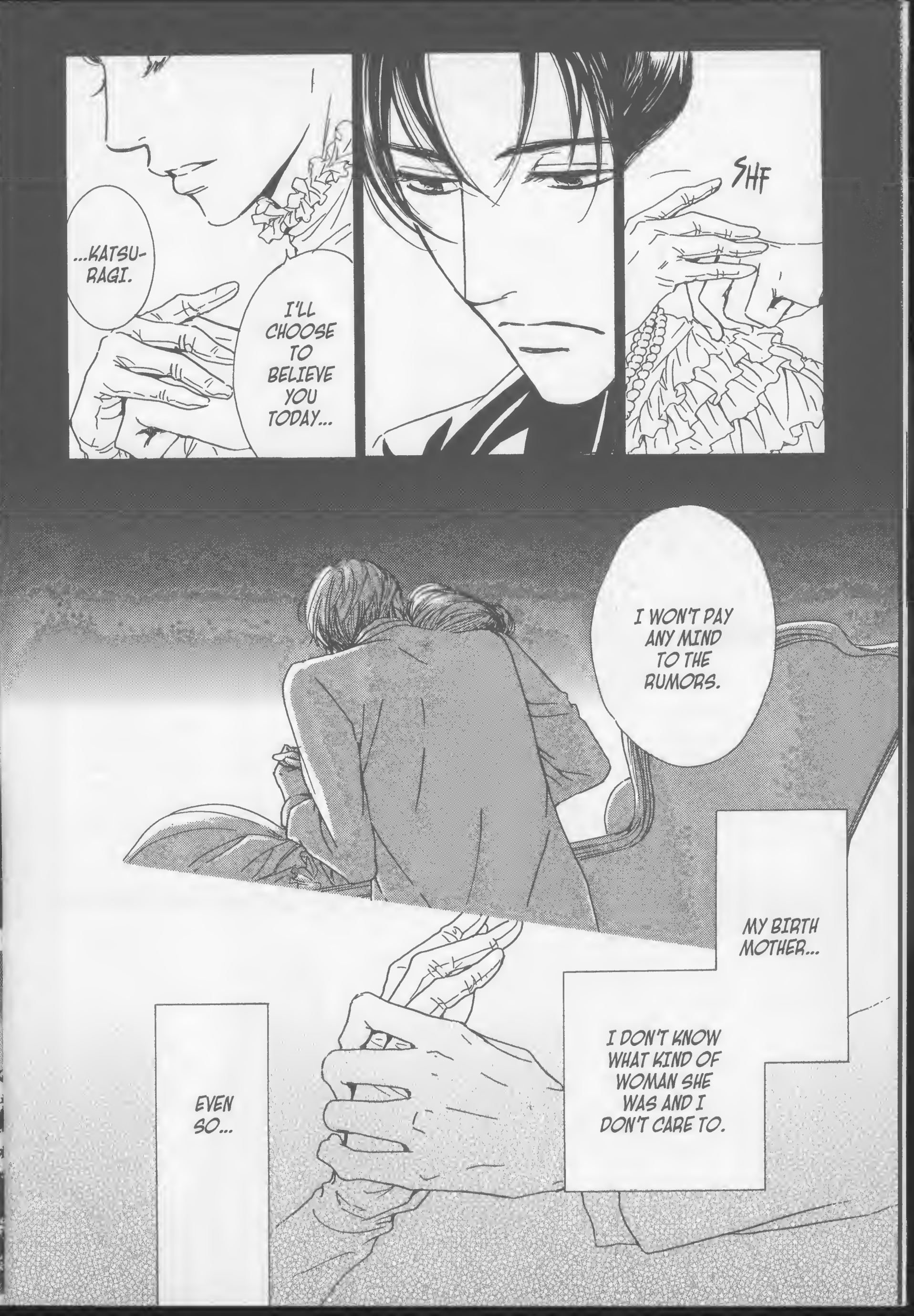
At ten years of age, Akihito became the young head of a viscountcy. From that point on, his butler and tutor, Katsuragi, took over raising him and did so in a rather severe manner. Akihito's adoration of Katsuragi eventually changed to love. To further the family name, the butler agreed to sleep with Akihito but only on the condition that he work toward getting promoted to a higher rank. However, no matter how many liaisons they had, Akihito still couldn't come to understand Katsuragi's true motives. It was then that he discovered that Katsuragi was actually his grandfather's illegitimate child! This discovery led Katsuragi to leave the Kuze house in order to join the Ishizaki household and caused Akihito to resolve to give up his title. Akihito broke off his arranged engagement with Duke Sajo's daughter and made threats against Marquise Moriyama. Finally, knowing how far Akihito was prepared to go, Katsuragi confessed his love!

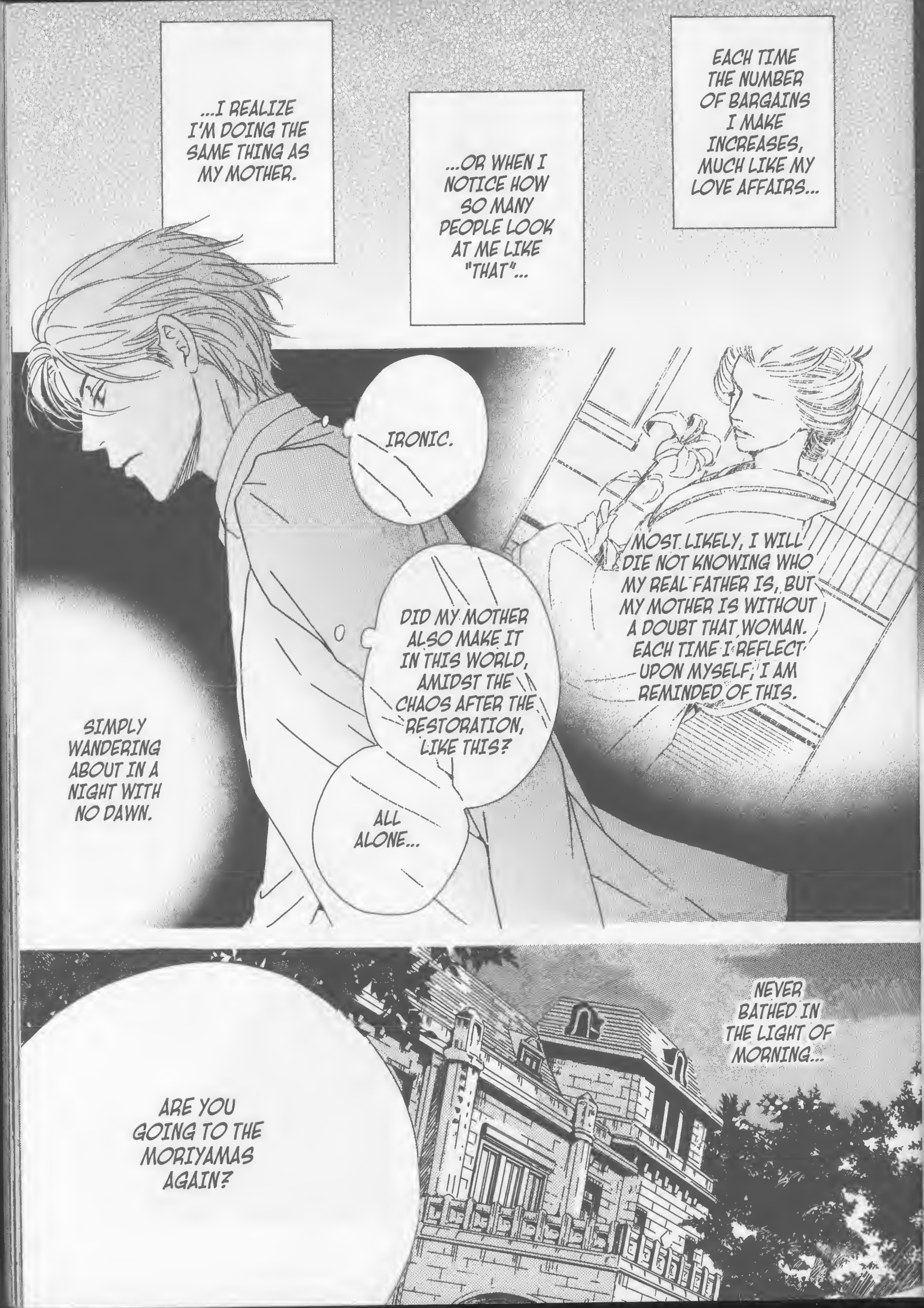

KATSURAGI.
WHAT KIND OF PERSON IS YOUR MASTER AKIHITO?
...
I COULDN'T SAY.
THAT'S A RATHER ODD RESPONSE.
THE YOUNG MASTER WILL BE RETURNING HERE TO THE MAIN KUZE ESTATE UPON THE NEW YEAR, WON'T HE?
IN THE GENERAL COURSE OF THINGS, YOU AS THE BUTLER WOULD WELCOME—
I HAVE NO INTEREST IN HIM.

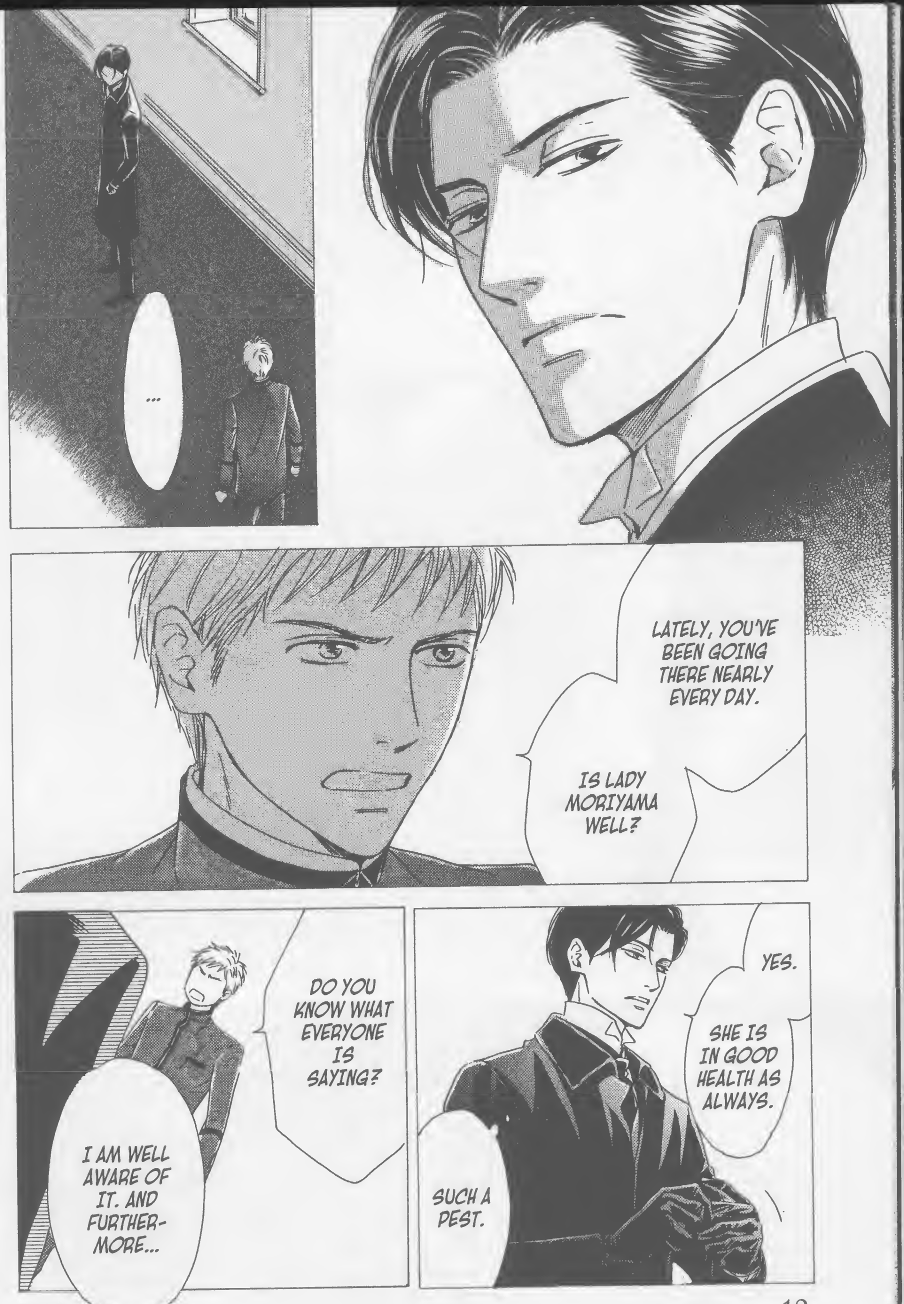

HE WAS BORN IN KAMAKURA AND RAISED IN A VILLA THERE.
HIS PREDECESSOR HID HIM AWAY, AND NOW, AFTER ALL THESE MONTHS, HE THROWS A TANTRUM AND WILL NOT LEAVE THE VILLA.
COMING FROM THIS ESTATE IN THE OLD FIEF...
...THIS YOUNG MASTER, WHO HAS NEVER EVEN ONCE BEEN TO THE TOKYO MAIN HOUSE—
WELL, WHY SHOULD I HAVE TO BOW MY HEAD AND WELCOME HIM HERE?
I DOUBT HE IS EVEN FIT TO BE THE HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
...
I'VE SAID TOO MUCH.
I BORE YOU WITH BANALITIES.
IT DOES SEEM SO.
I'LL PRETEND I DIDN'T HEAR IT.

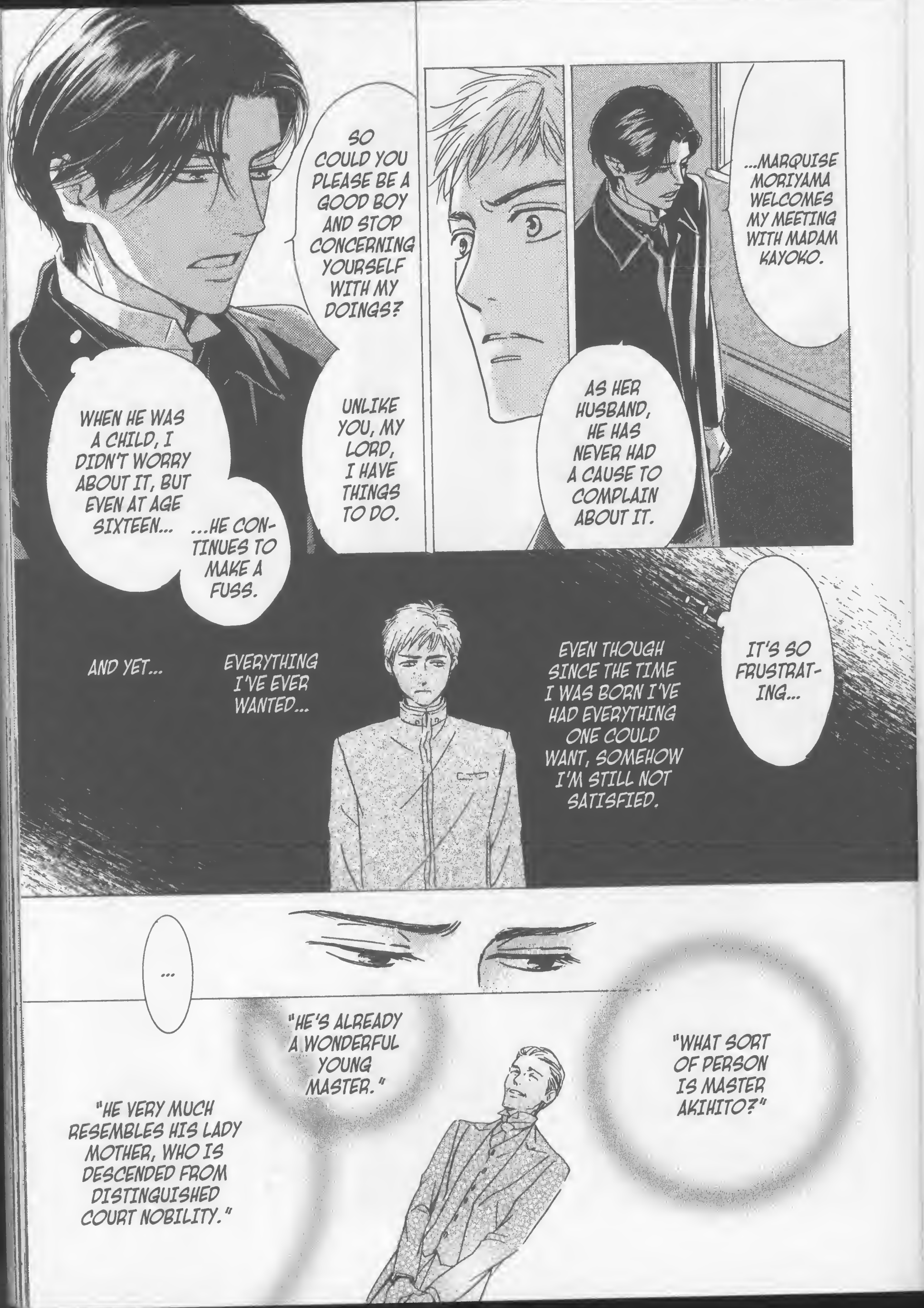

...
INCIDENTALLY, MADAM KAYOKO...
ABOUT THE SUCCESSION OF THIS MASTER AKIHITO TO THE PEERAGE...
I WOULD LIKE TO ASK MARQUISE MORIYAMA TO ACCOMPANY HIM AS HIS GUARDIAN WHEN HE VISITS THE IMPERIAL COURT.
PERHAPS A GOOD WORD FROM YOU?
I SEE.
I DO WONDER WHAT MORIYAMA WILL SAY...
IN EXCHANGE...
...I PROMISE I WILL BRING ABOUT AN ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN YOUR ELDEST DAUGHTER, MISTRESS TAKAKO, AND MASTER SHIGEYUKI OF THE SAIONJI HOUSE.
TAKAKO?
MARRY THE HEIR TO THE SAIONJI MARQUESSATE?
HA

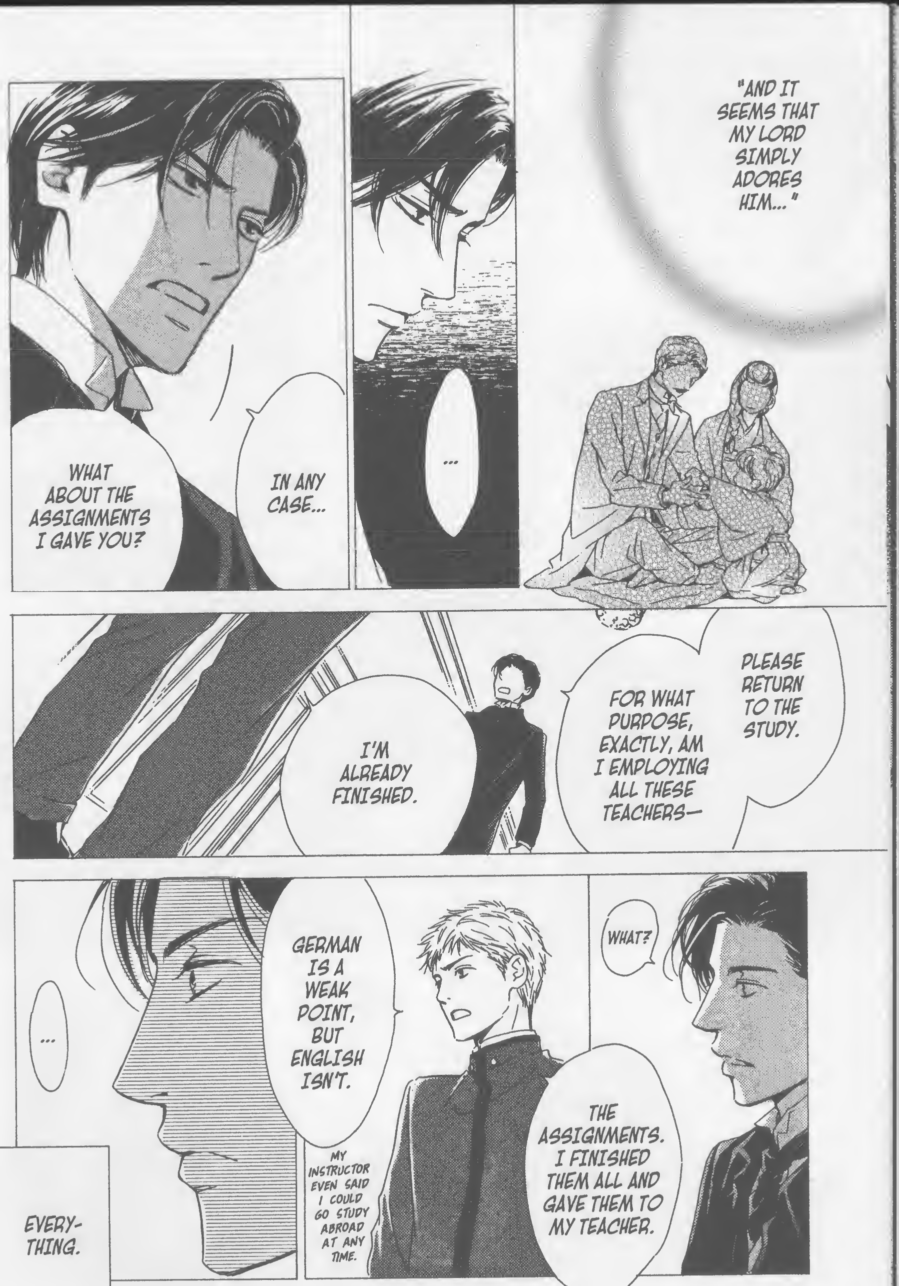

COULD SUCH A THING EVEN HAPPEN, I WONDER?
THE FAMILIES OF THE IMPERIAL COURT DISLIKE THE NEW NOBILITY AND KEEP THEIR DISTANCE.
AND KATSURAGI, ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS I'VE HEARD STRANGE RUMORS ABOUT YOU AND THAT YOUNG MAN—
THEY'RE JUST RUMORS.
SHK
ALTHOUGH IT IS CERTAINLY THE CASE THAT I AM FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO BE QUITE CLOSE WITH MASTER SHIGEYUKI...
...OUR RELATIONSHIP IS COMPLETELY INNOCENT.
THE IMPORTANT MATTER HERE IS THAT...
...IF MISTRESS TAKAKO IS GIVEN TO THE SAIONJI HOUSE IN MARRIAGE, HER POSITION WILL ALSO BECOME QUITE SOLID.
YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT MEANS, MADAM KAYOKO.
CHK
CHK
...

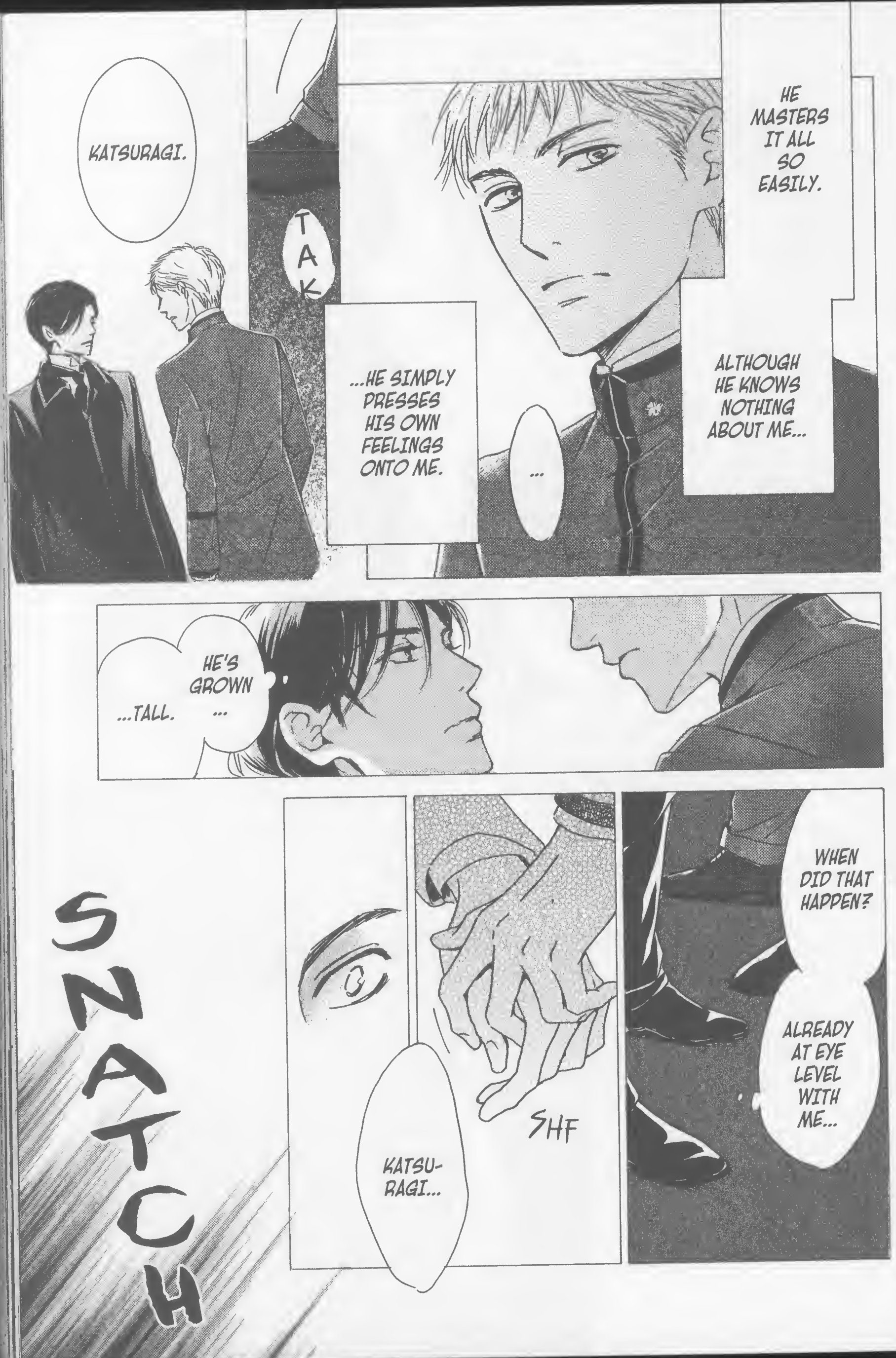

SHF
I'LL CHOOSE TO BELIEVE YOU TODAY...
...KATSURAGI.
I WON'T PAY ANY MIND TO THE RUMORS.
MY BIRTH MOTHER...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF WOMAN SHE WAS AND I DON'T CARE TO.
EVEN SO...

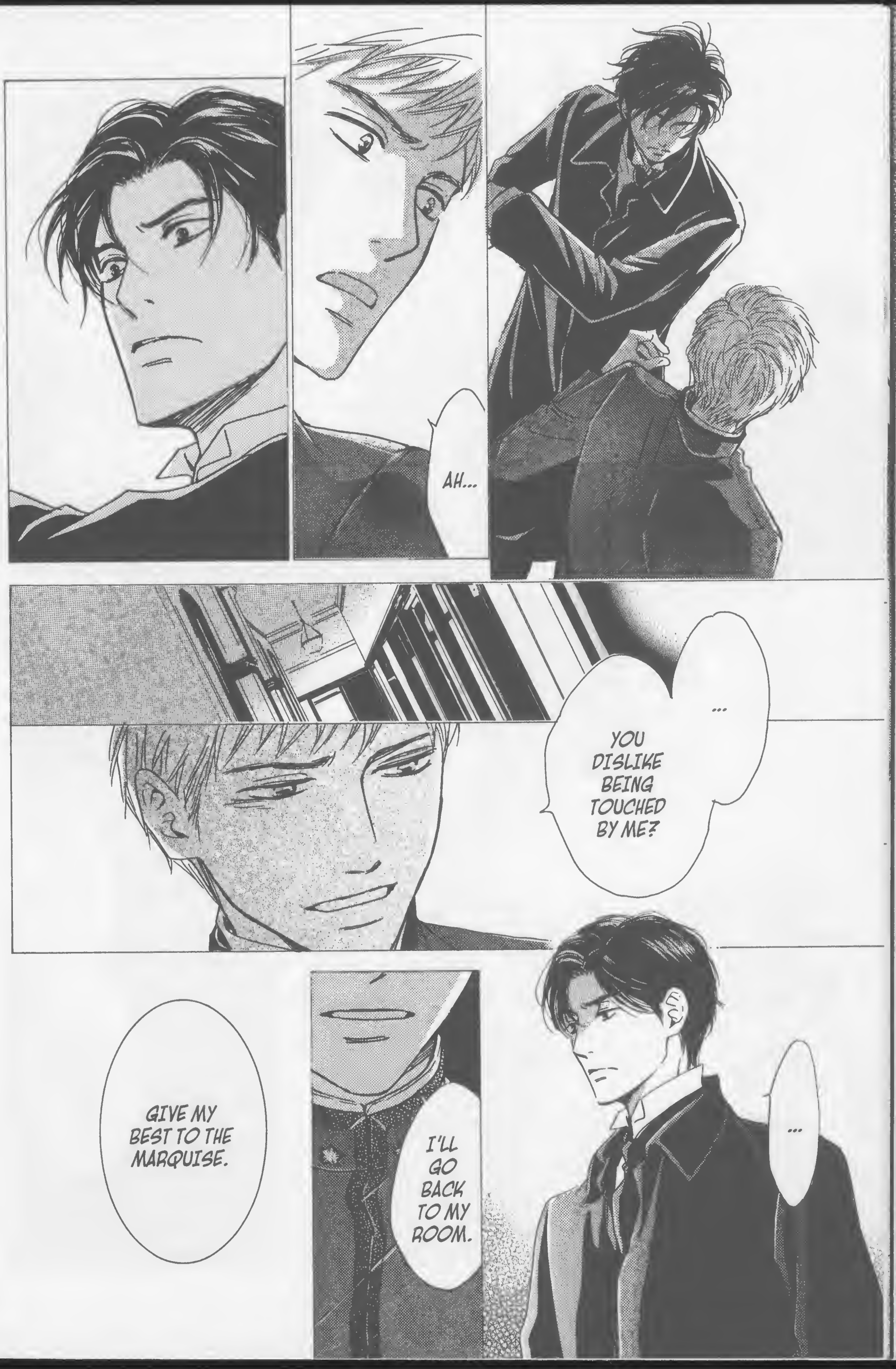

EACH TIME THE NUMBER OF BARGAINS I MAKE INCREASES, MUCH LIKE MY LOVE AFFAIRS...
...OR WHEN I NOTICE HOW SO MANY PEOPLE LOOK AT ME LIKE "THAT"...
...I REALIZE I'M DOING THE SAME THING AS MY MOTHER.
MOST LIKELY, I WILL DIE NOT KNOWING WHO MY REAL FATHER IS, BUT MY MOTHER IS WITHOUT A DOUBT THAT WOMAN. EACH TIME I REFLECT UPON MYSELF, I AM REMINDED OF THIS.
IRONIC.
DID MY MOTHER ALSO MAKE IT IN THIS WORLD, AMIDST THE CHAOS AFTER THE RESTORATION, LIKE THIS?
ALL ALONE...
SIMPLY WANDERING ABOUT IN A NIGHT WITH NO DAWN.
NEVER BATHED IN THE LIGHT OF MORNING...
ARE YOU GOING TO THE MORIYAMAS AGAIN?

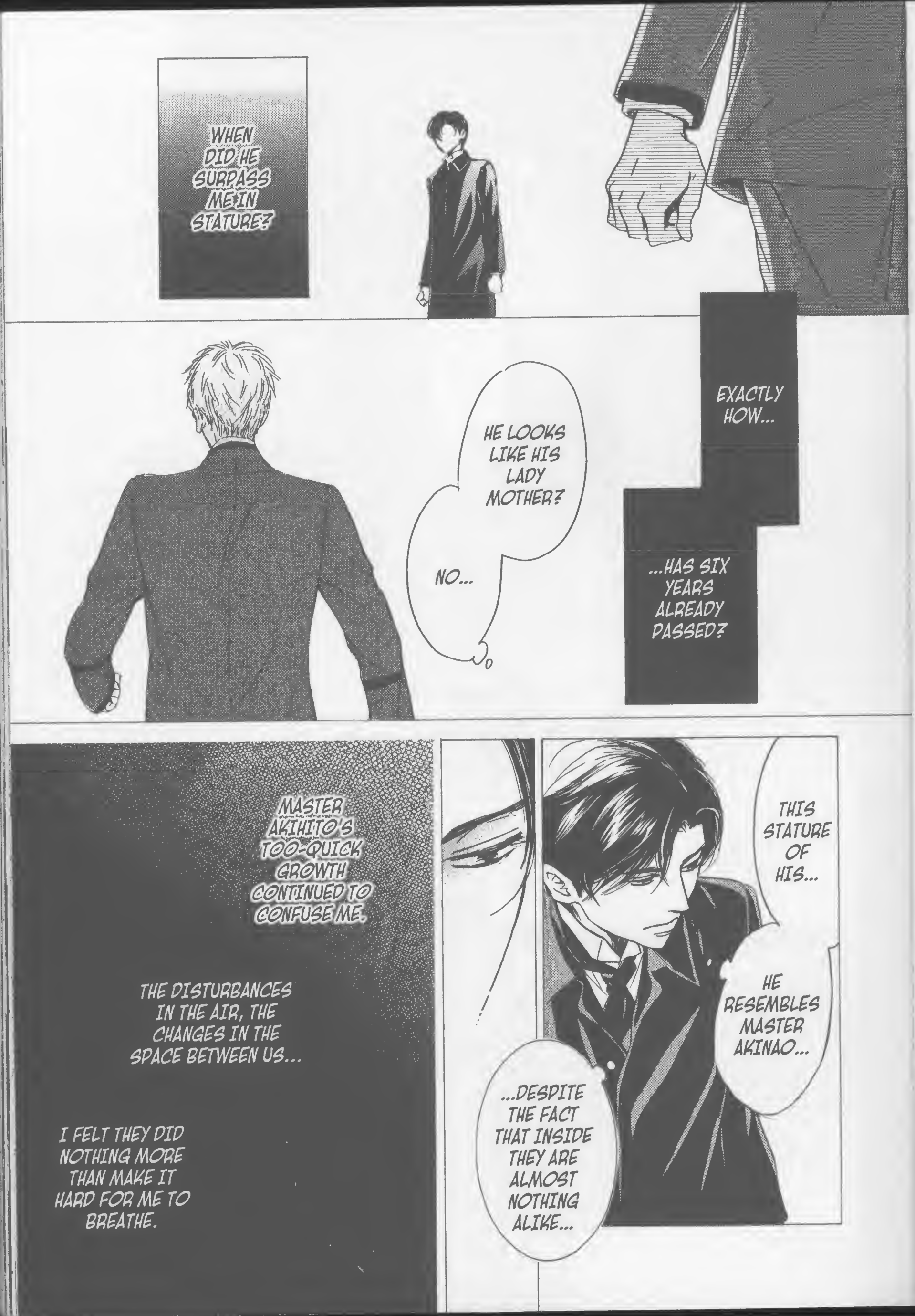

...
LATELY, YOU'VE BEEN GOING THERE NEARLY EVERY DAY.
IS LADY MORIYAMA WELL?
YES.
SHE IS IN GOOD HEALTH AS ALWAYS.
SUCH A PEST.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT EVERYONE IS SAYING?
I AM WELL AWARE OF IT. AND FURTHERMORE...

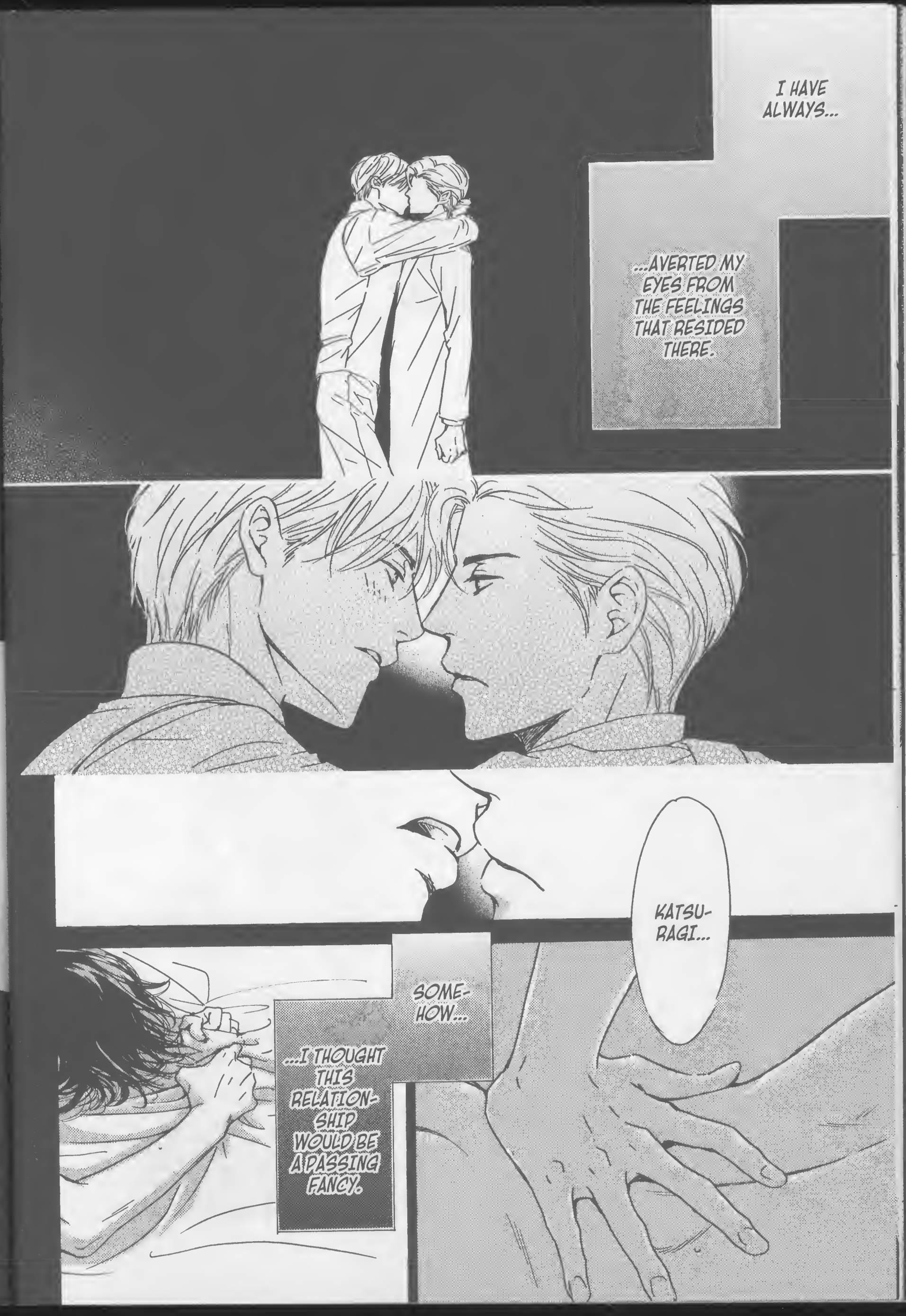

...MARQUISE MORIYAMA WELCOMES MY MEETING WITH MADAM KAYOKO.
AS HER HUSBAND, HE HAS NEVER HAD A CAUSE TO COMPLAIN ABOUT IT.
UNLIKE YOU, MY LORD, I HAVE THINGS TO DO.
SO COULD YOU PLEASE BE A GOOD BOY AND STOP CONCERNING YOURSELF WITH MY DOINGS?
WHEN HE WAS A CHILD, I DIDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT, BUT EVEN AT AGE SIXTEEN...
...HE CONTINUES TO MAKE A FUSS.
IT'S SO FRUSTRATING...
EVEN THOUGH SINCE THE TIME I WAS BORN I'VE HAD EVERYTHING ONE COULD WANT, SOMEHOW I'M STILL NOT SATISFIED.
EVERYTHING I'VE EVER WANTED...
AND YET...
...
"WHAT SORT OF PERSON IS MASTER AKIHITO?"
"HE'S ALREADY A WONDERFUL YOUNG MASTER."
"HE VERY MUCH RESEMBLES HIS LADY MOTHER, WHO IS DESCENDED FROM DISTINGUISHED COURT NOBILITY."

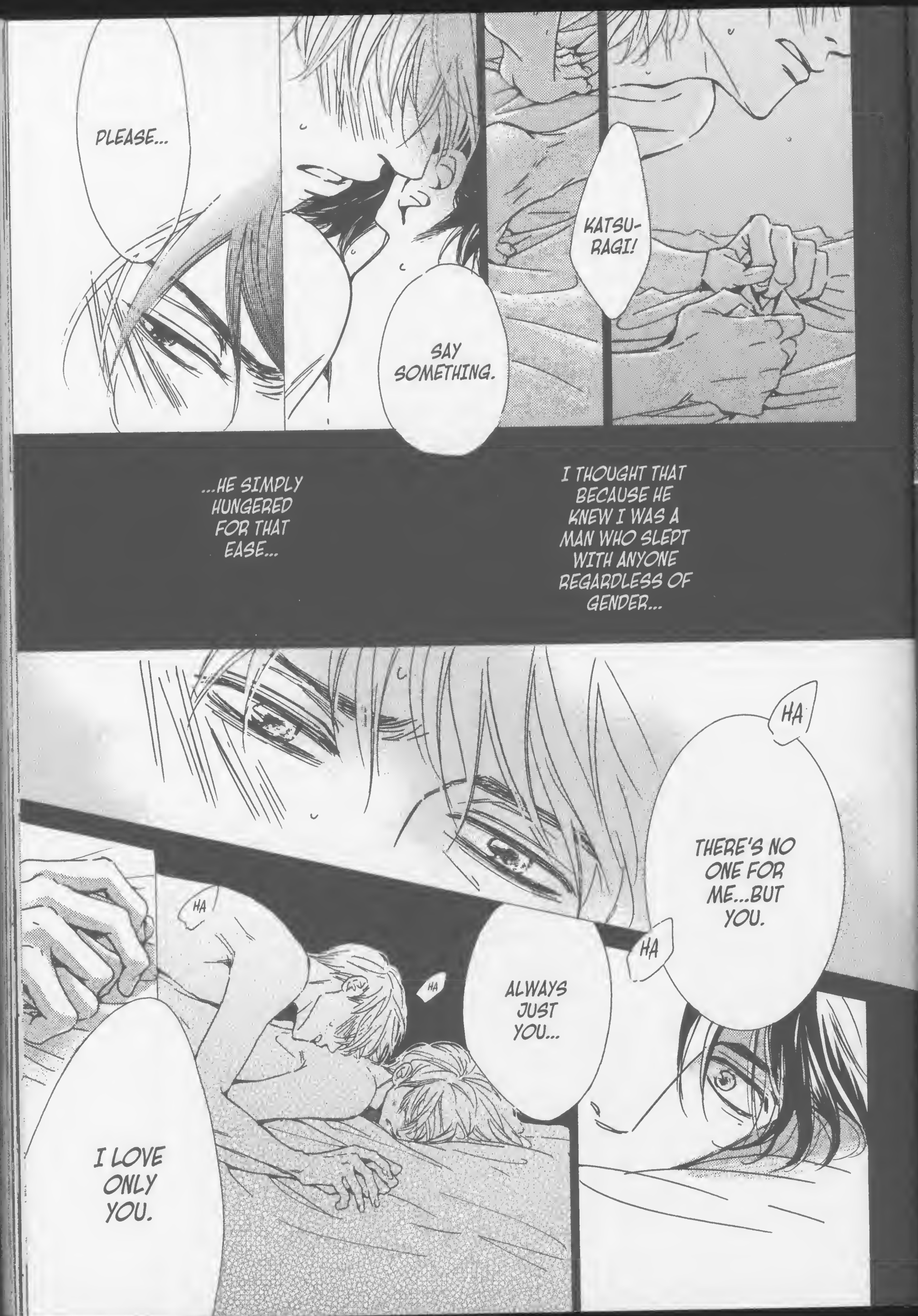

"AND IT SEEMS THAT MY LORD SIMPLY ADORES HIM..."
...
IN ANY CASE...
WHAT ABOUT THE ASSIGNMENTS I GAVE YOU?
PLEASE RETURN TO THE STUDY.
FOR WHAT PURPOSE, EXACTLY, AM I EMPLOYING ALL THESE TEACHERS—
I'M ALREADY FINISHED.
WHAT?
THE ASSIGNMENTS. I FINISHED THEM ALL AND GAVE THEM TO MY TEACHER.
GERMAN IS A WEAK POINT, BUT ENGLISH ISN'T.
MY INSTRUCTOR EVEN SAID I COULD GO STUDY ABROAD AT ANY TIME.
...
EVERYTHING.

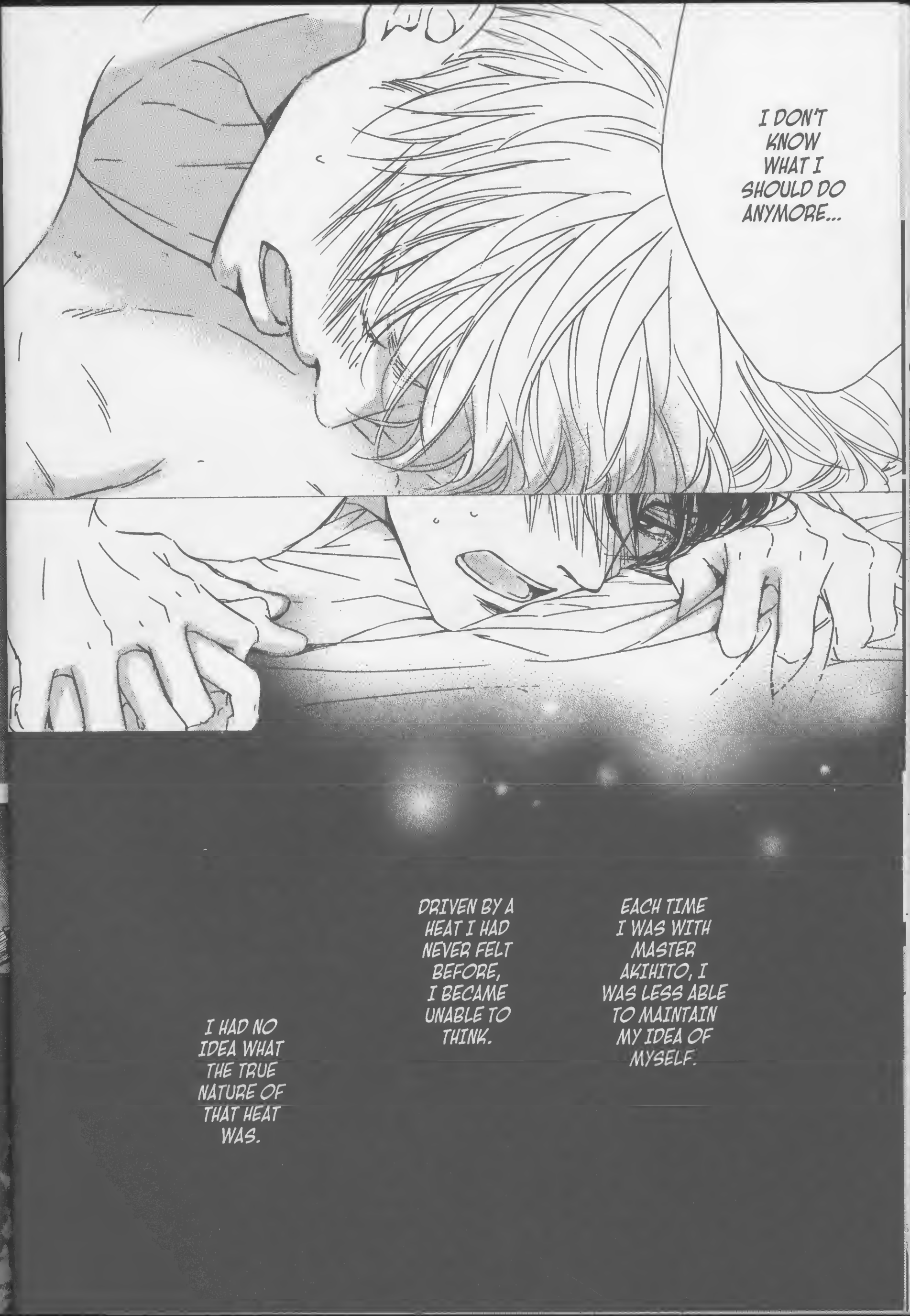

HE MASTERS IT ALL SO EASILY.
ALTHOUGH HE KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT ME...
...HE SIMPLY PRESSES HIS OWN FEELINGS ONTO ME.
...
TAK
KATSURAGI.
HE'S GROWN...
...TALL.
WHEN DID THAT HAPPEN?
ALREADY AT EYE LEVEL WITH ME...
SHF
KATSURAGI...
SNATCH

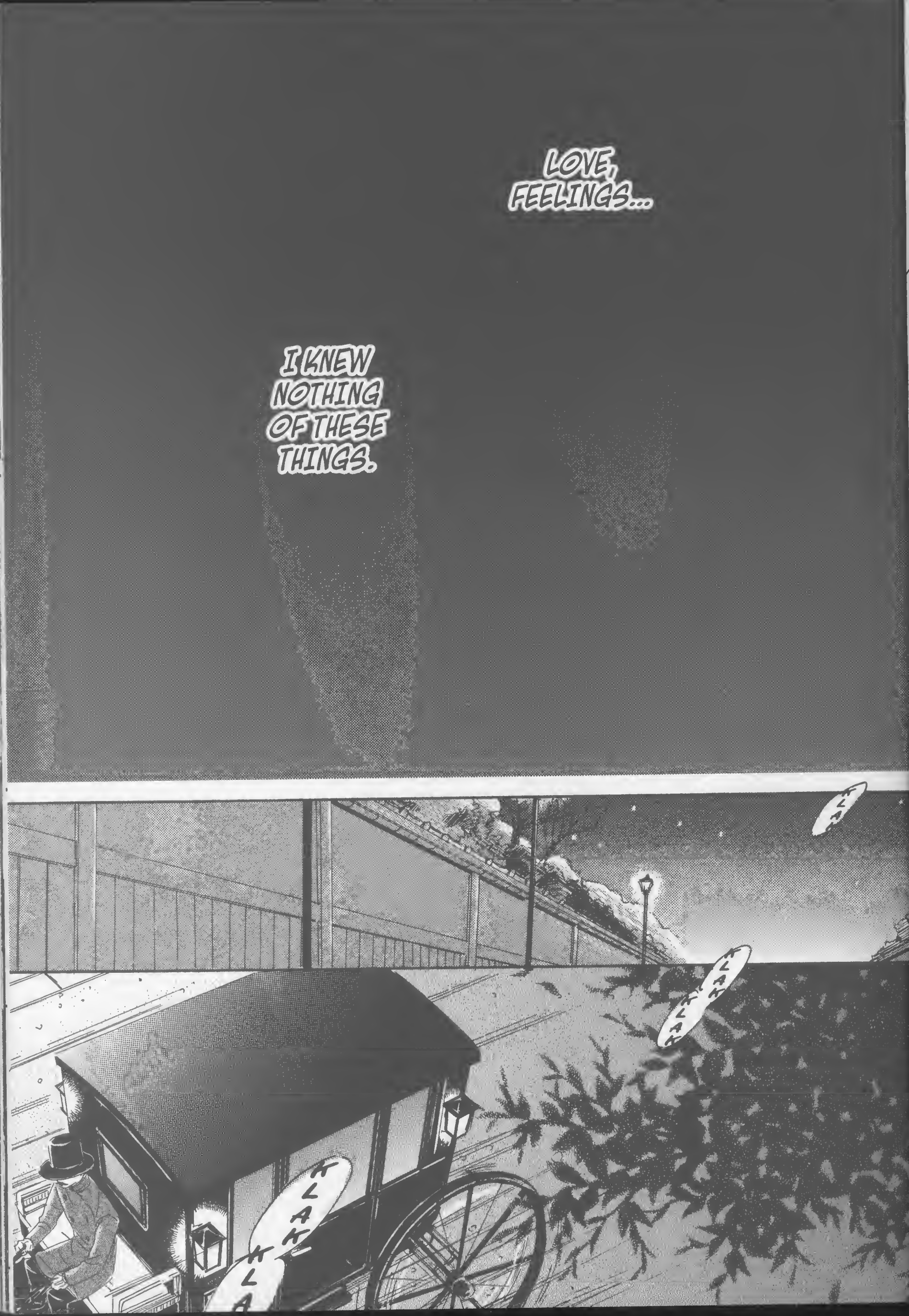

AH...
...
YOU DISLIKE BEING TOUCHED BY ME?
...
I'LL GO BACK TO MY ROOM.
GIVE MY BEST TO THE MARQUISE.

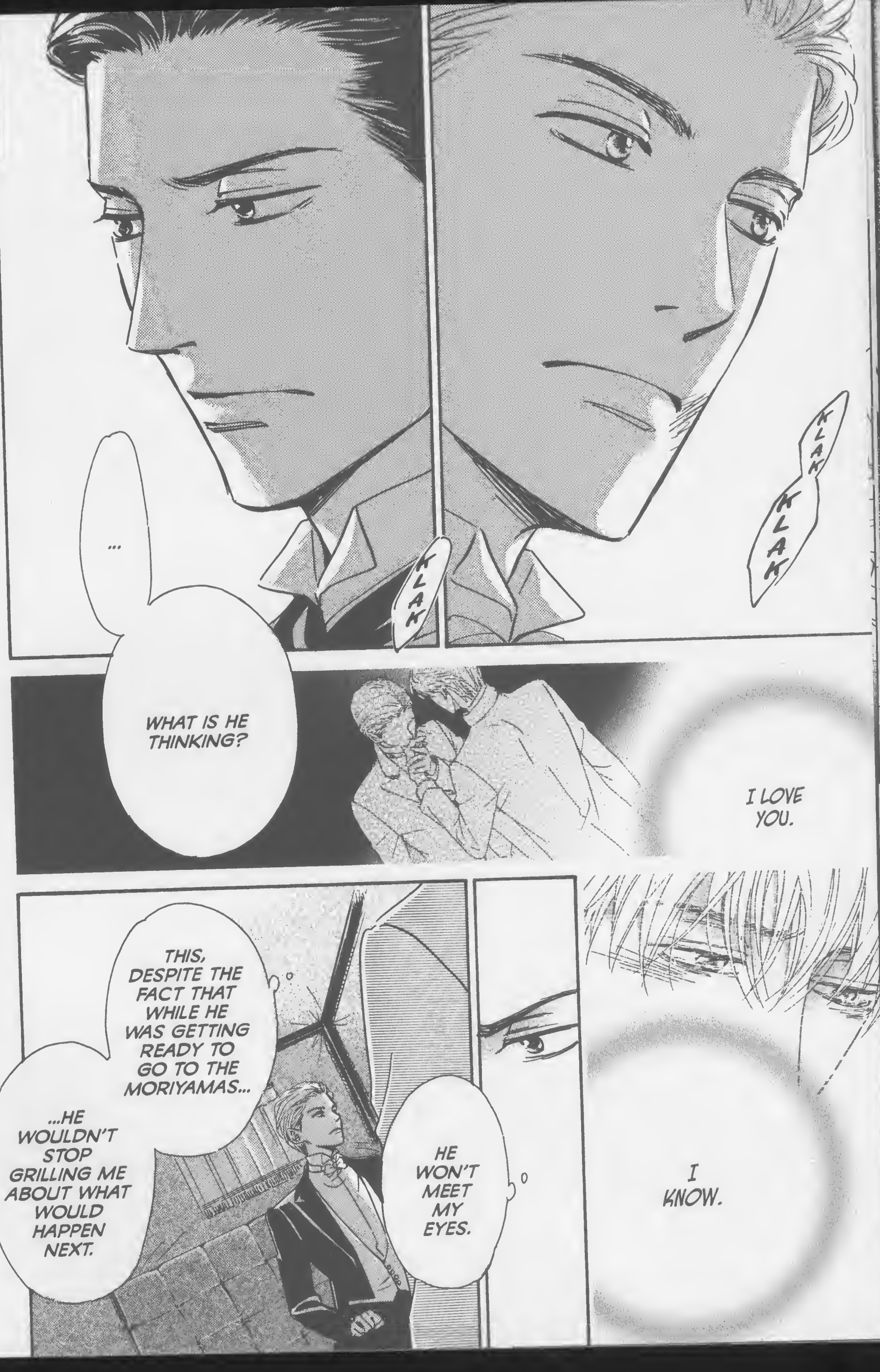

WHEN DID HE SURPASS ME IN STATURE?
EXACTLY HOW...
...HAS SIX YEARS ALREADY PASSED?
HE LOOKS LIKE HIS LADY MOTHER?
NO...
THIS STATURE OF HIS...
HE RESEMBLES MASTER AKINAO...
...DESPITE THE FACT THAT INSIDE THEY ARE ALMOST NOTHING ALIKE...
MASTER AKIHITO'S TOO-QUICK GROWTH CONTINUED TO CONFUSE ME.
THE DISTURBANCES IN THE AIR, THE CHANGES IN THE SPACE BETWEEN US...
I FELT THEY DID NOTHING MORE THAN MAKE IT HARD FOR ME TO BREATHE.

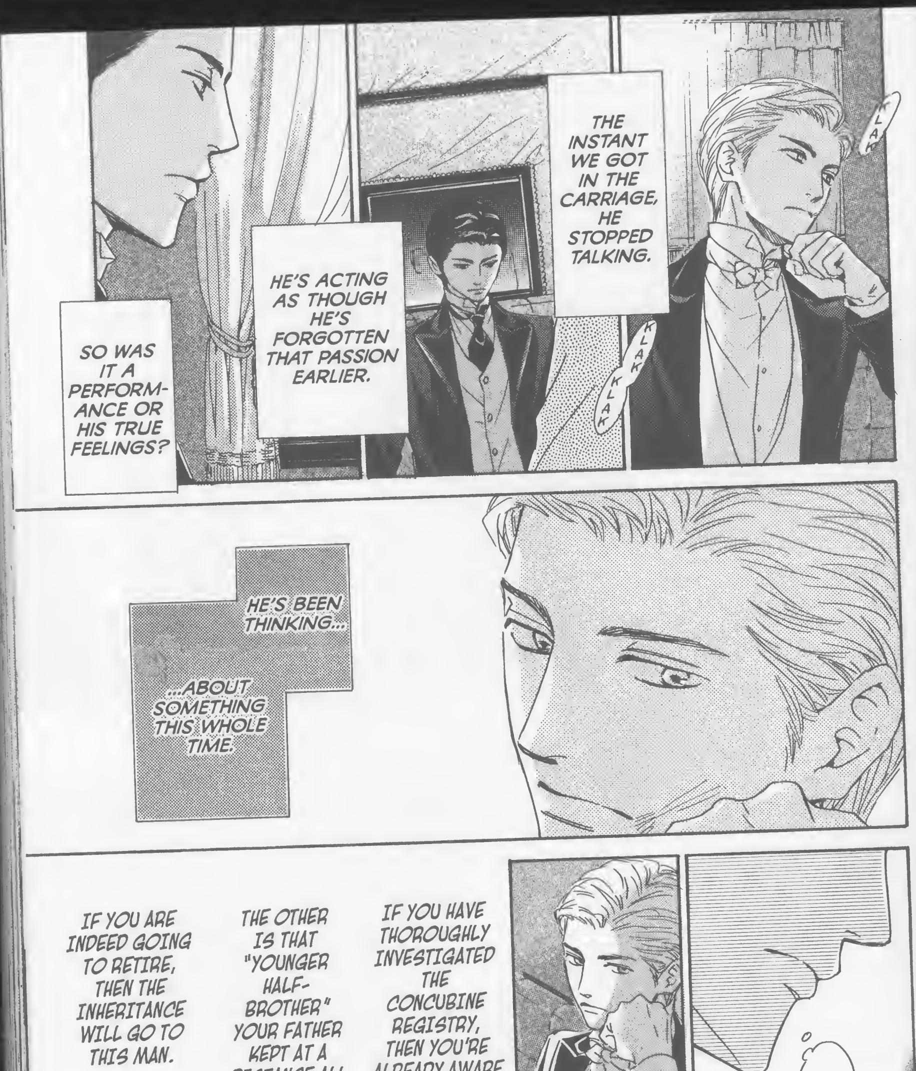

I HAVE ALWAYS...
...AVERTED MY EYES FROM THE FEELINGS THAT RESIDED THERE.
KATSU-RAGI...
SOME-HOW...
...I THOUGHT THIS RELATIONSHIP WOULD BE A PASSING FANCY.

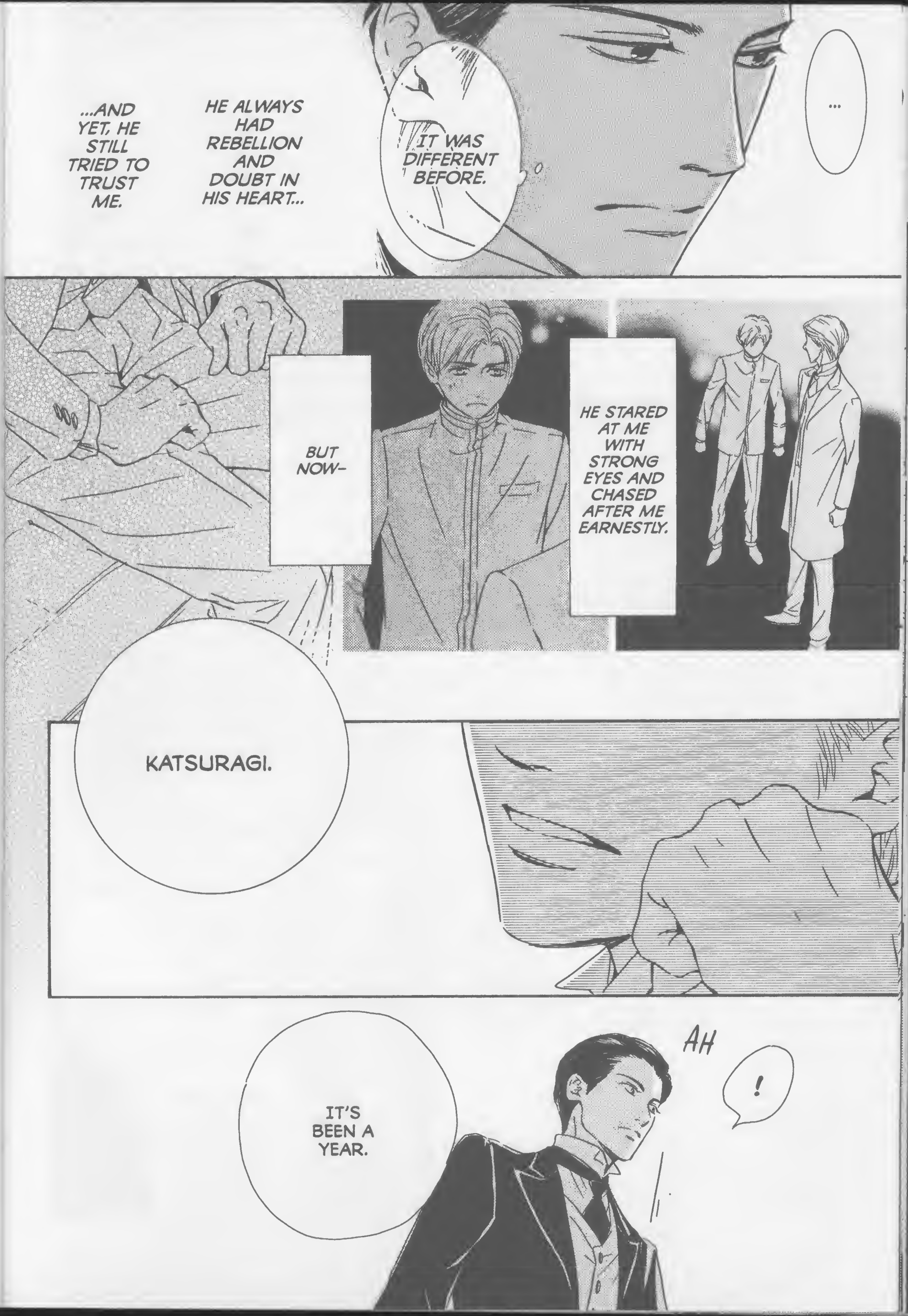

KATSU-RAGI!
SAY SOMETHING.
PLEASE...
I THOUGHT THAT BECAUSE HE KNEW I WAS A MAN WHO SLEPT WITH ANYONE REGARDLESS OF GENDER...
...HE SIMPLY HUNGERED FOR THAT EASE...
HA
THERE'S NO ONE FOR ME...BUT YOU.
HA
HA
ALWAYS JUST YOU...
HA
I LOVE ONLY YOU.

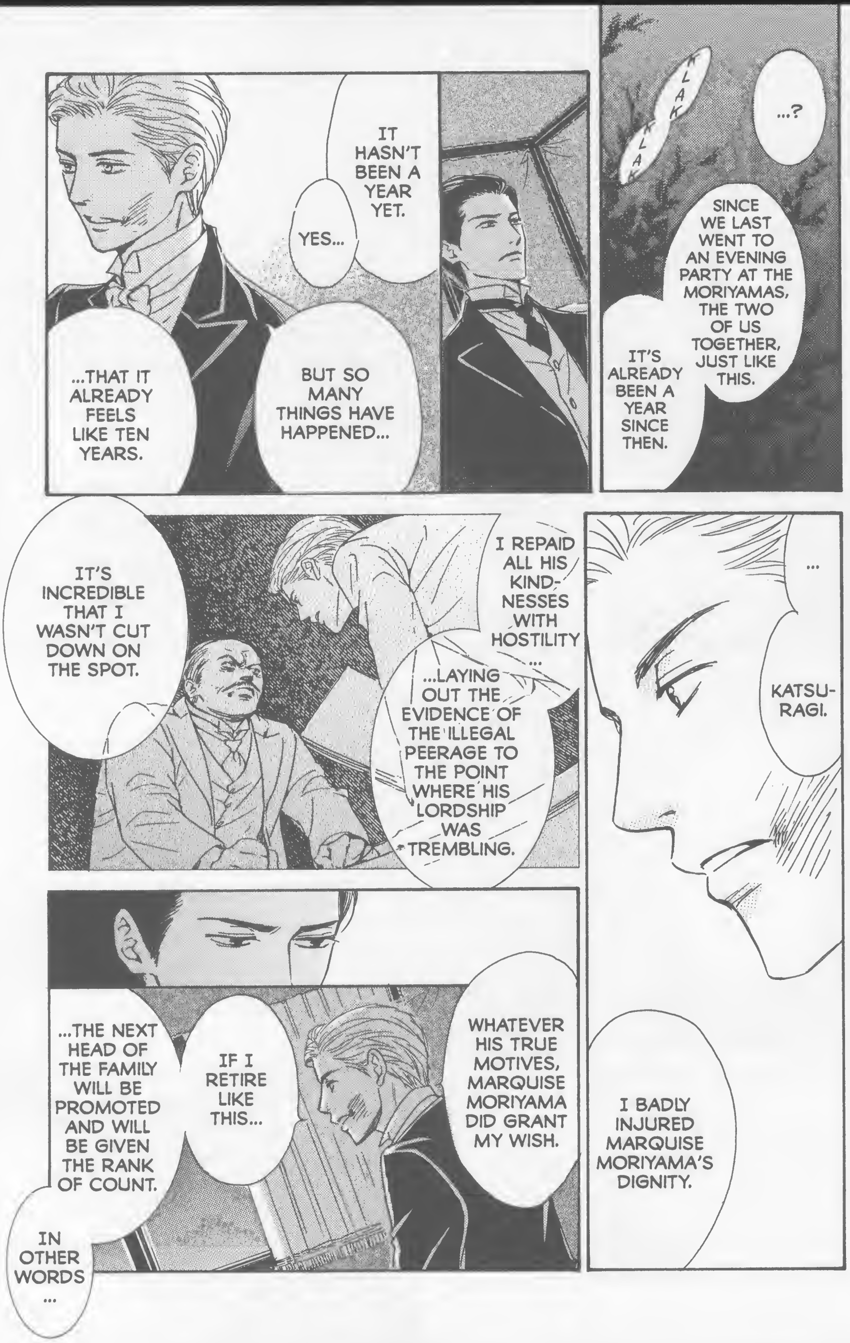

I DON'T KNOW WHAT I SHOULD DO ANYMORE...
EACH TIME I WAS WITH MASTER AKIHITO, I WAS LESS ABLE TO MAINTAIN MY IDEA OF MYSELF.
DRIVEN BY A HEAT I HAD NEVER FELT BEFORE, I BECAME UNABLE TO THINK.
I HAD NO IDEA WHAT THE TRUE NATURE OF THAT HEAT WAS.

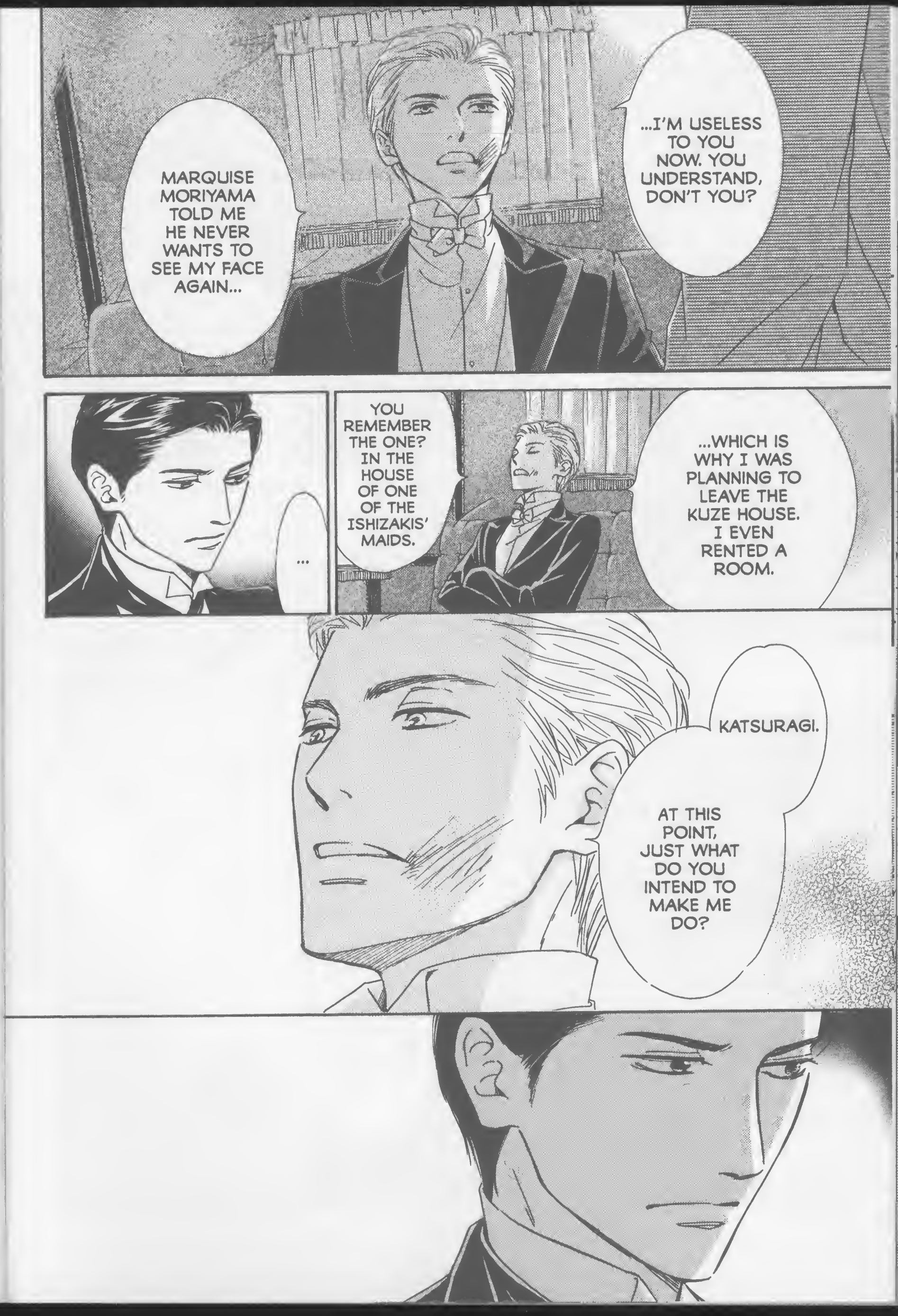

LOVE, FEELINGS...
I KNEW NOTHING OF THESE THINGS.
KLAK
KLAK KLAK
KLAK
KLAK

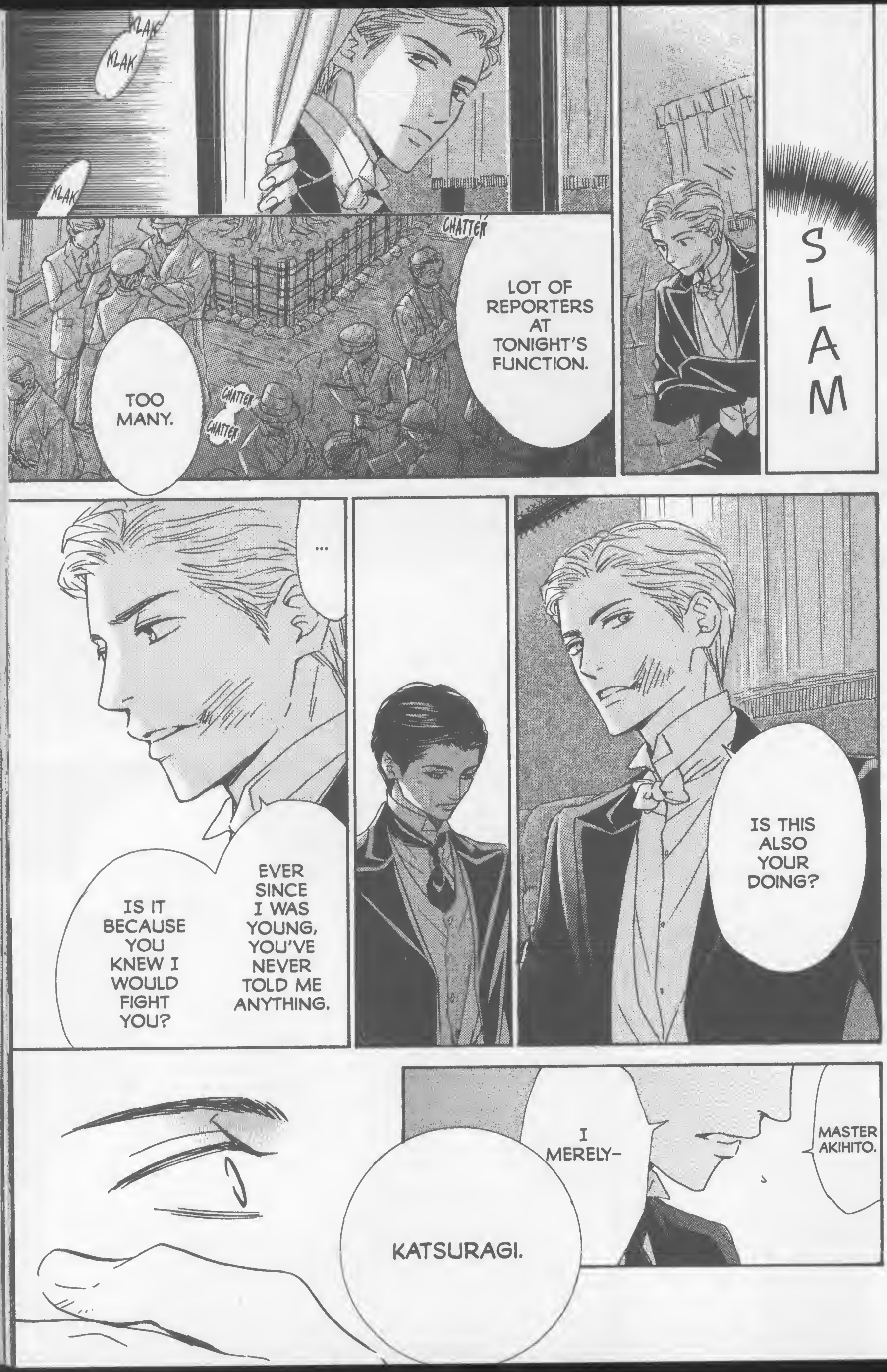

KLAK KLAK
KLAK
...
WHAT IS HE THINKING?
I LOVE YOU.
I KNOW.
HE WON'T MEET MY EYES.
THIS, DESPITE THE FACT THAT WHILE HE WAS GETTING READY TO GO TO THE MORIYAMAS...
...HE WOULDN'T STOP GRILLING ME ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT.

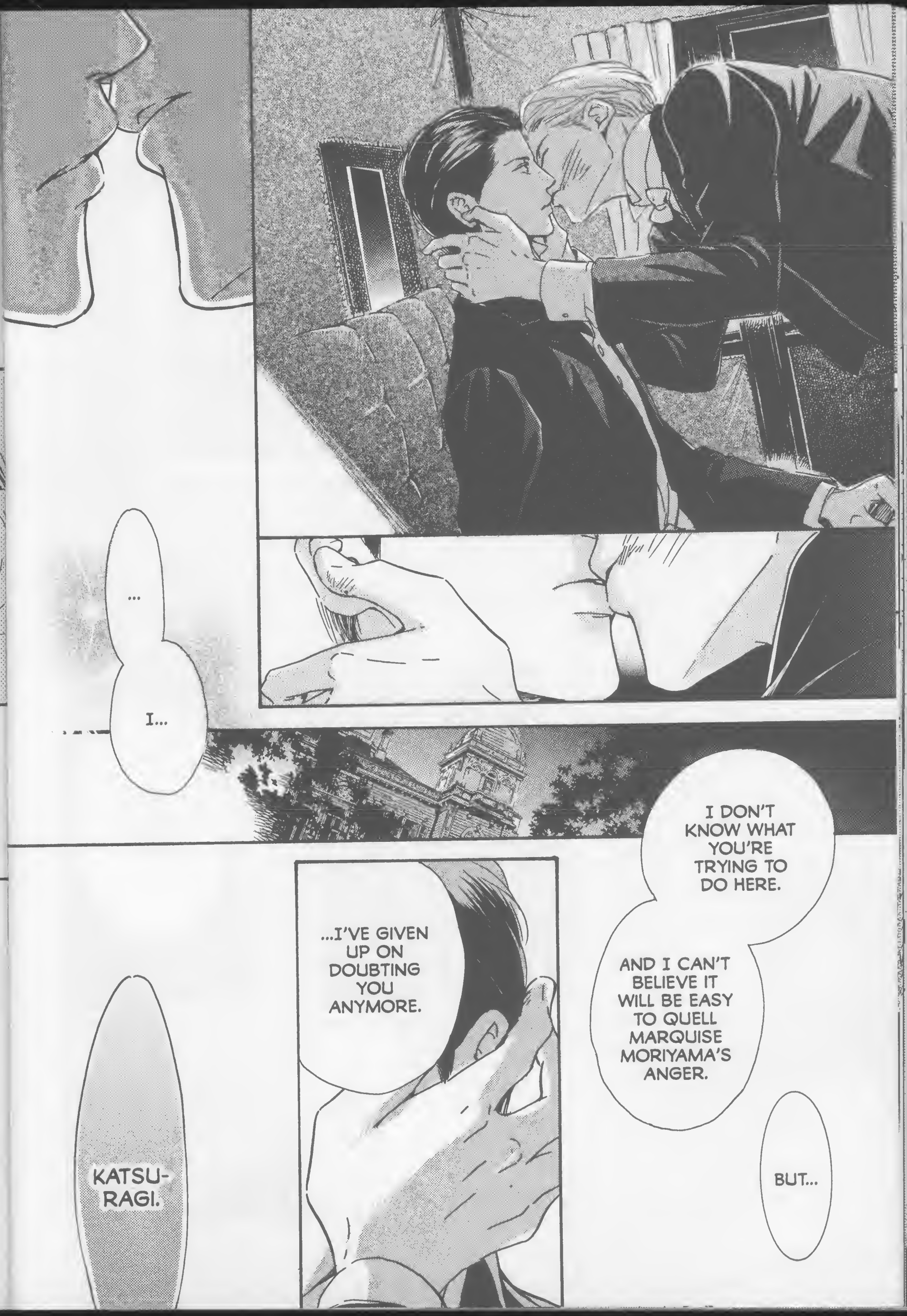

THE INSTANT WE GOT IN THE CARRIAGE, HE STOPPED TALKING.
KLAK
KLAK KLAK
HE'S ACTING AS THOUGH HE'S FORGOTTEN THAT PASSION EARLIER.
SO WAS IT A PERFORMANCE OR HIS TRUE FEELINGS?
HE'S BEEN THINKING...
...ABOUT SOMETHING THIS WHOLE TIME.
...
PERHAPS HE'S SEARCHING FOR A FALSITY IN MY WORDS...
IF YOU HAVE THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATED THE CONCUBINE REGISTRY, THEN YOU'RE ALREADY AWARE OF THIS.
THE OTHER IS THAT "YOUNGER HALF-BROTHER" YOUR FATHER KEPT AT A DISTANCE ALL THESE YEARS.
IF YOU ARE INDEED GOING TO RETIRE, THEN THE INHERITANCE WILL GO TO THIS MAN.
I SUPPOSE I CAN'T HOPE HE WILL FOLLOW ALONG OBEDIENTLY...

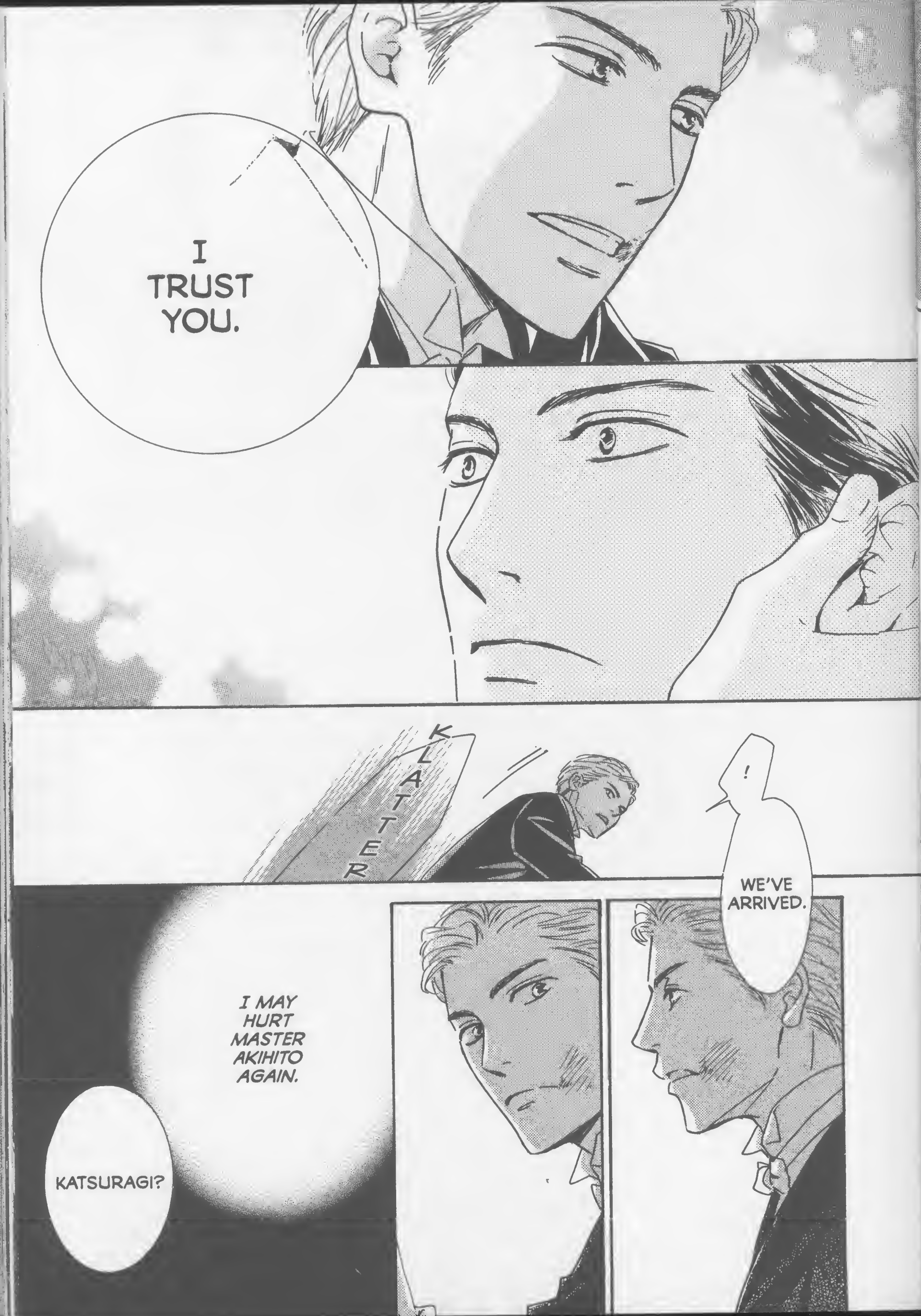

...
IT WAS DIFFERENT BEFORE.
HE ALWAYS HAD REBELLION AND DOUBT IN HIS HEART...
...AND YET, HE STILL TRIED TO TRUST ME.
HE STARED AT ME WITH STRONG EYES AND CHASED AFTER ME EARNESTLY.
BUT NOW—
KATSURAGI.
!
AH
IT'S BEEN A YEAR.

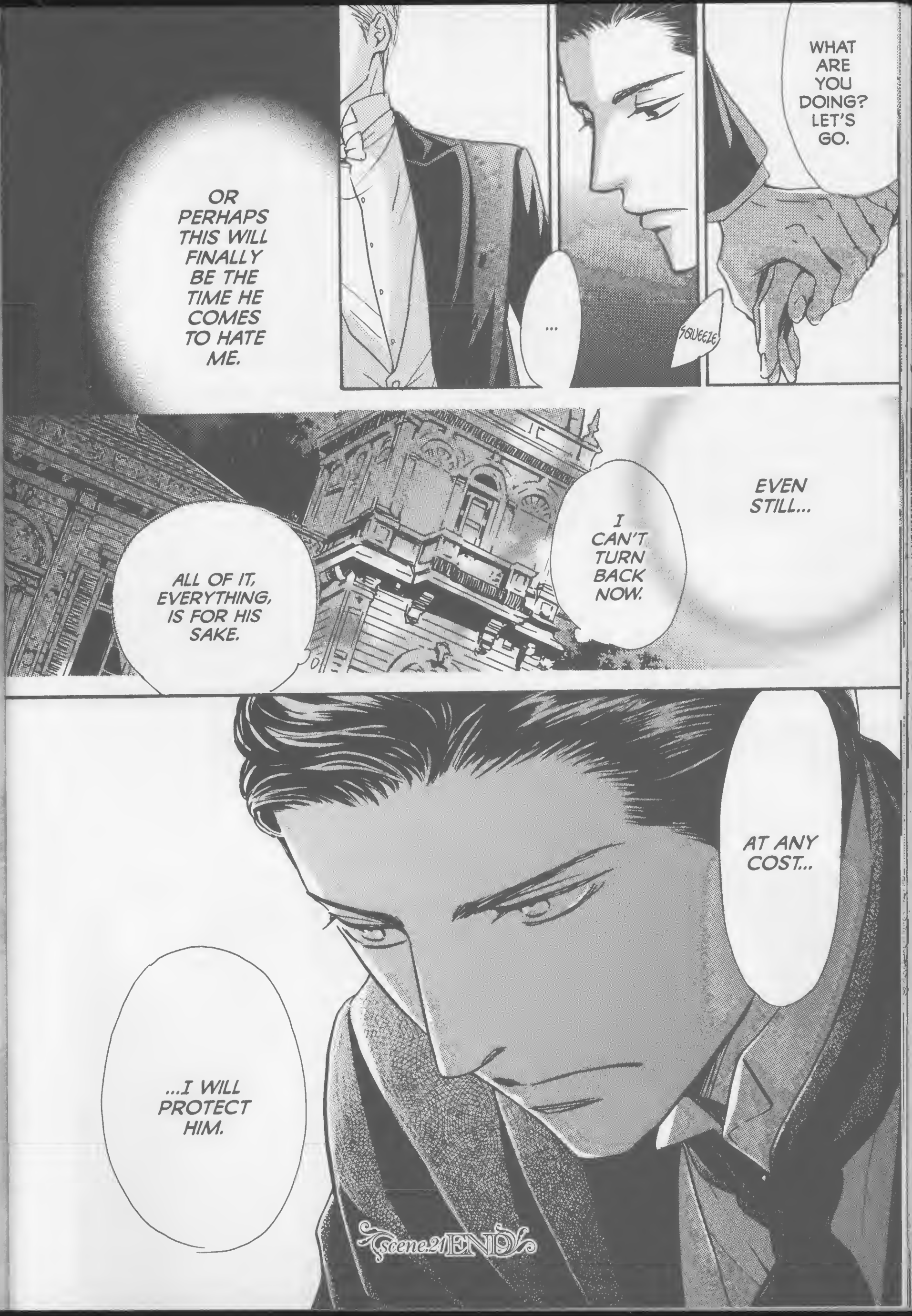

...?
KLAK KLAK
SINCE WE LAST WENT TO AN EVENING PARTY AT THE MORIYAMAS, THE TWO OF US TOGETHER, JUST LIKE THIS.
IT'S ALREADY BEEN A YEAR SINCE THEN.
IT HASN'T BEEN A YEAR YET.
YES...
BUT SO MANY THINGS HAVE HAPPENED...
...THAT IT ALREADY FEELS LIKE TEN YEARS.
...
KATSURAGI.
I REPAID ALL HIS KINDNESSES WITH HOSTILITY...
...LAYING OUT THE EVIDENCE OF THE ILLEGAL PEERAGE TO THE POINT WHERE HIS LORDSHIP WAS TREMBLING.
IT'S INCREDIBLE THAT I WASN'T CUT DOWN ON THE SPOT.
I BADLY INJURED MARQUISE MORIYAMA'S DIGNITY.
WHATEVER HIS TRUE MOTIVES, MARQUISE MORIYAMA DID GRANT MY WISH.
IF I RETIRE LIKE THIS...
...THE NEXT HEAD OF THE FAMILY WILL BE PROMOTED AND WILL BE GIVEN THE RANK OF COUNT.
IN OTHER WORDS...


...I'M USELESS TO YOU NOW. YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU?
MARQUISE MORIYAMA TOLD ME HE NEVER WANTS TO SEE MY FACE AGAIN...
...WHICH IS WHY I WAS PLANNING TO LEAVE THE KUZE HOUSE. I EVEN RENTED A ROOM.
YOU REMEMBER THE ONE? IN THE HOUSE OF ONE OF THE ISHIZAKIS' MAIDS.
...
KATSURAGI.
AT THIS POINT, JUST WHAT DO YOU INTEND TO MAKE ME DO?

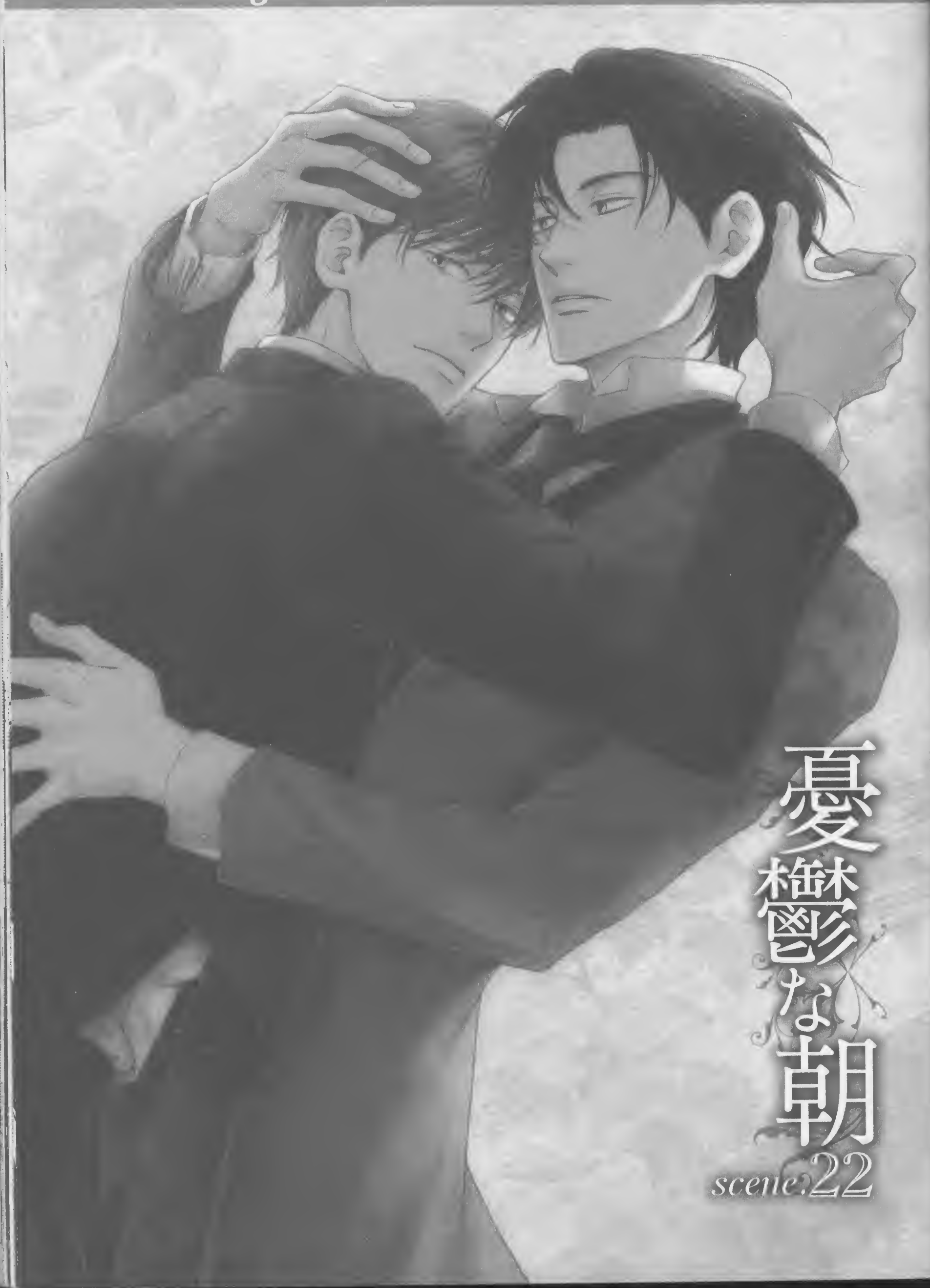

SLAM
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
CHATTER
LOT OF REPORTERS AT TONIGHT'S FUNCTION.
TOO MANY.
CHATTER
CHATTER
IS THIS ALSO YOUR DOING?
...
EVER SINCE I WAS YOUNG, YOU'VE NEVER TOLD ME ANYTHING.
IS IT BECAUSE YOU KNEW I WOULD FIGHT YOU?
MASTER AKIHITO.
I MERELY–
KATSURAGI.

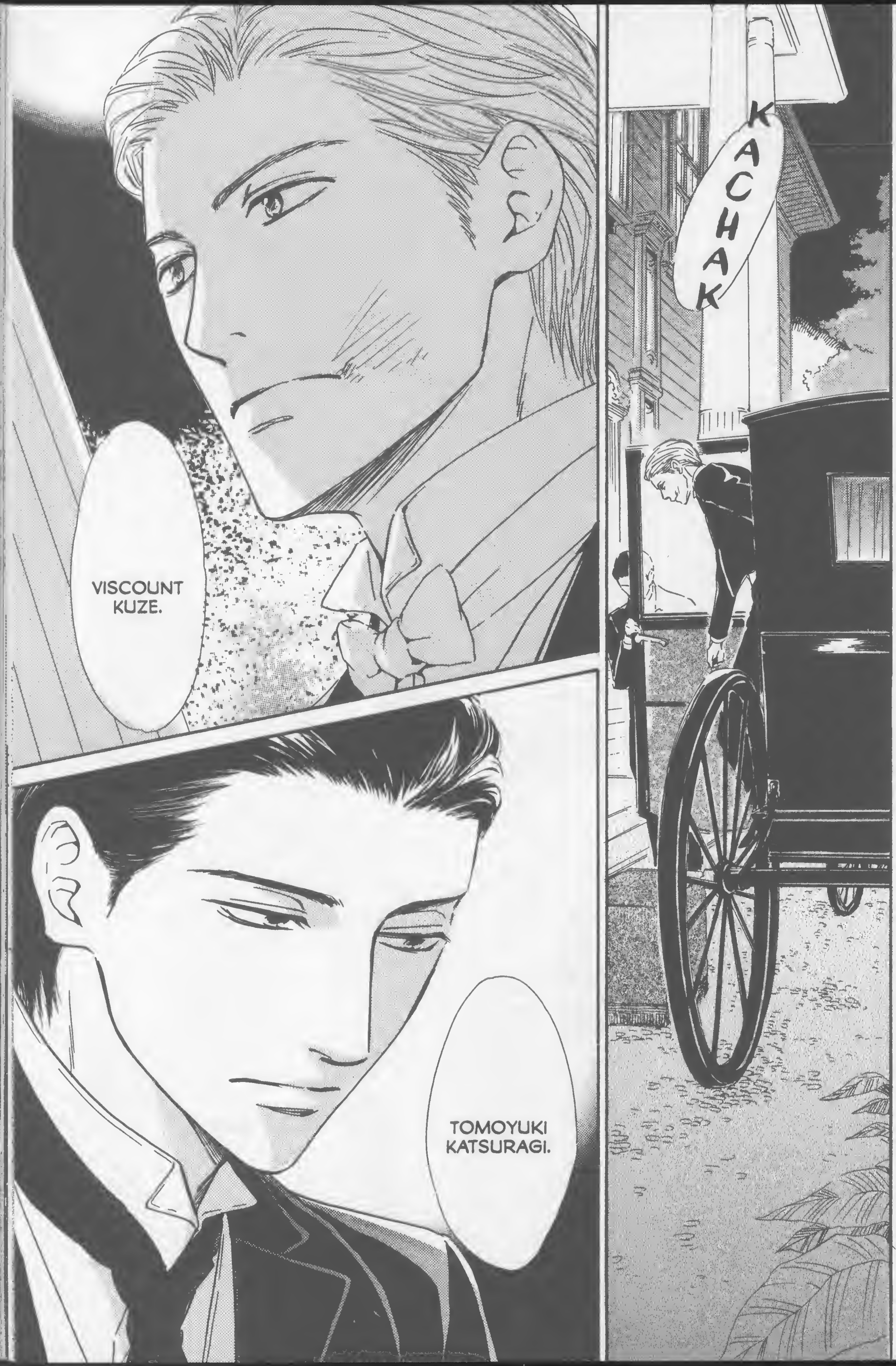

...
I...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO HERE.
AND I CAN'T BELIEVE IT WILL BE EASY TO QUELL MARQUISE MORIYAMA'S ANGER.
BUT...
...I'VE GIVEN UP ON DOUBTING YOU ANYMORE.
KATSU-RAGI.


I TRUST YOU.
KLATTER
!
WE'VE ARRIVED.
I MAY HURT MASTER AKIHITO AGAIN.
KATSURAGI?


WHAT ARE YOU DOING? LET'S GO.
SQUEEZE
...
OR PERHAPS THIS WILL FINALLY BE THE TIME HE COMES TO HATE ME.
EVEN STILL...
I CAN'T TURN BACK NOW.
ALL OF IT, EVERYTHING, IS FOR HIS SAKE.
AT ANY COST...
...I WILL PROTECT HIM.
scene.21 END

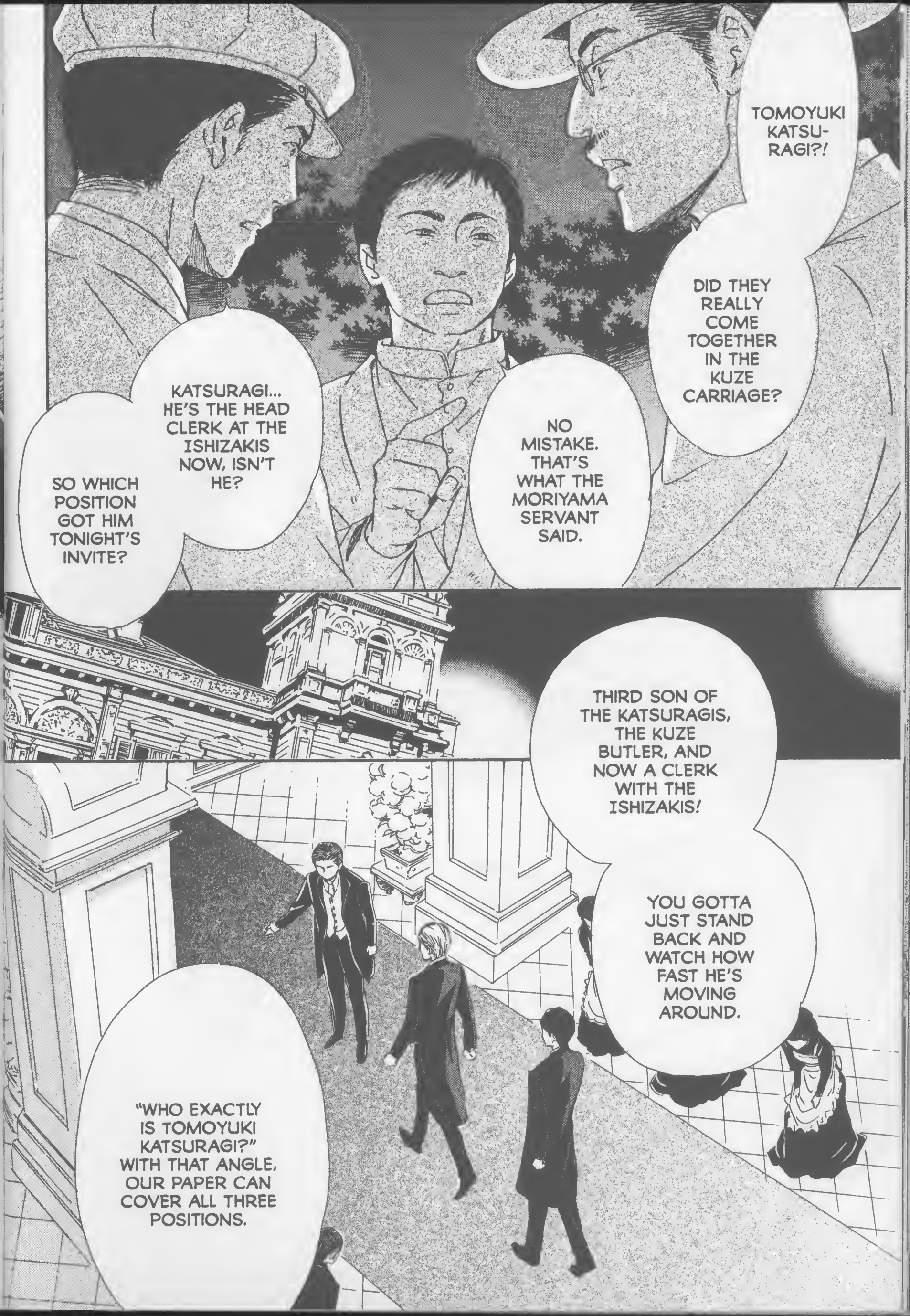
Blue Morning: Scene 22

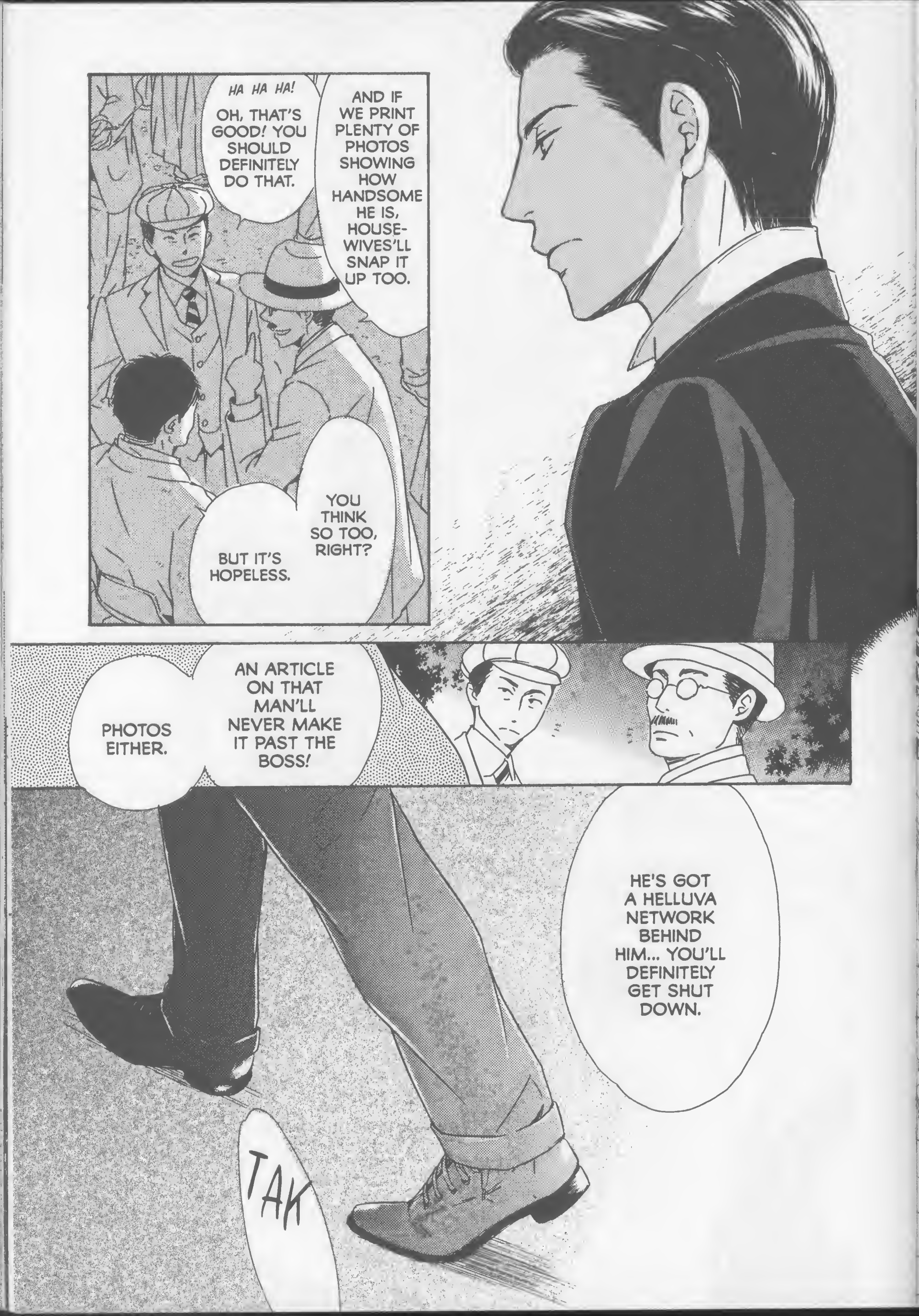

憂鬱な朝
scene.22

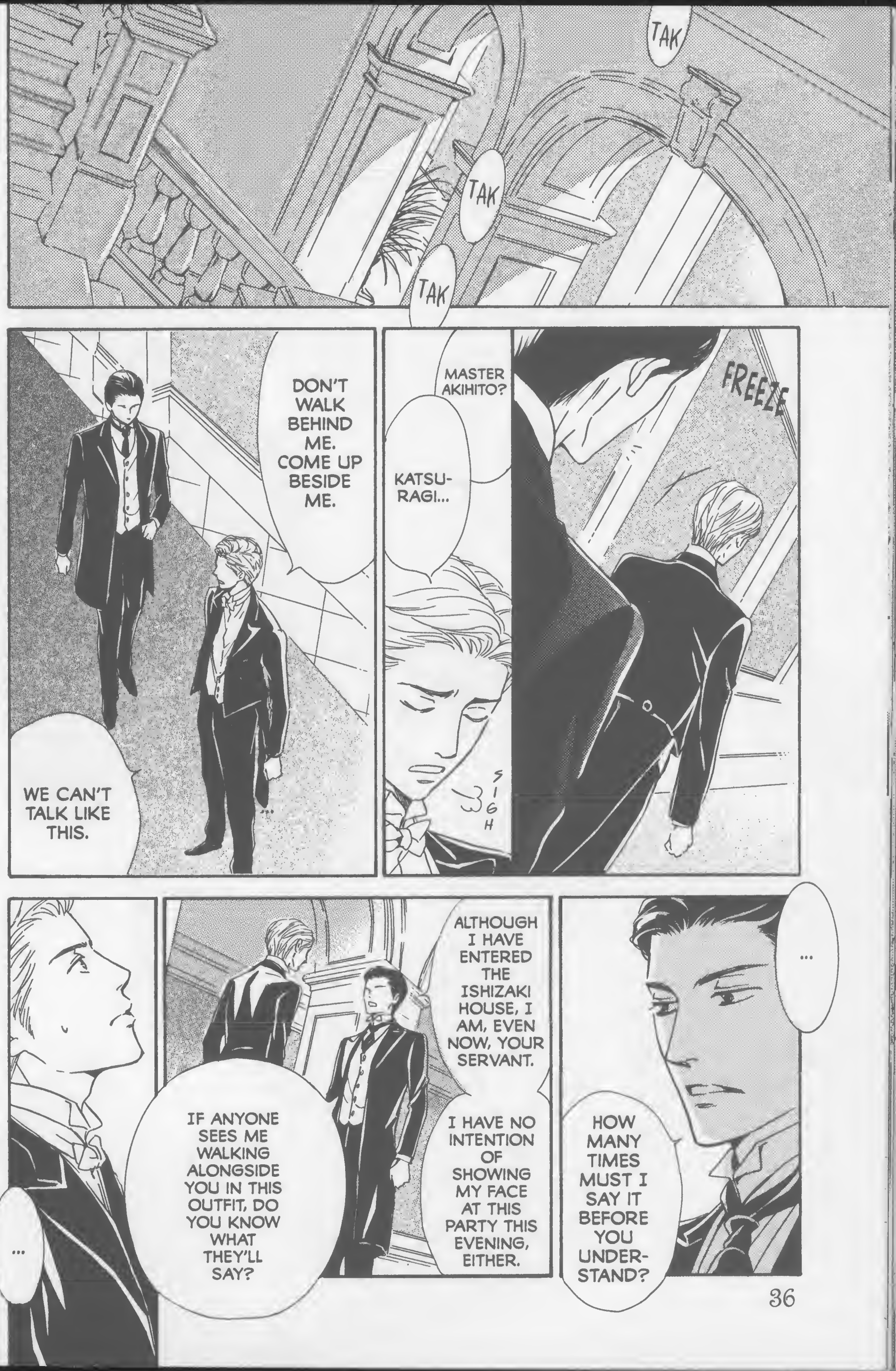

KACHAK
VISCOUNT KUZE.
TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI.

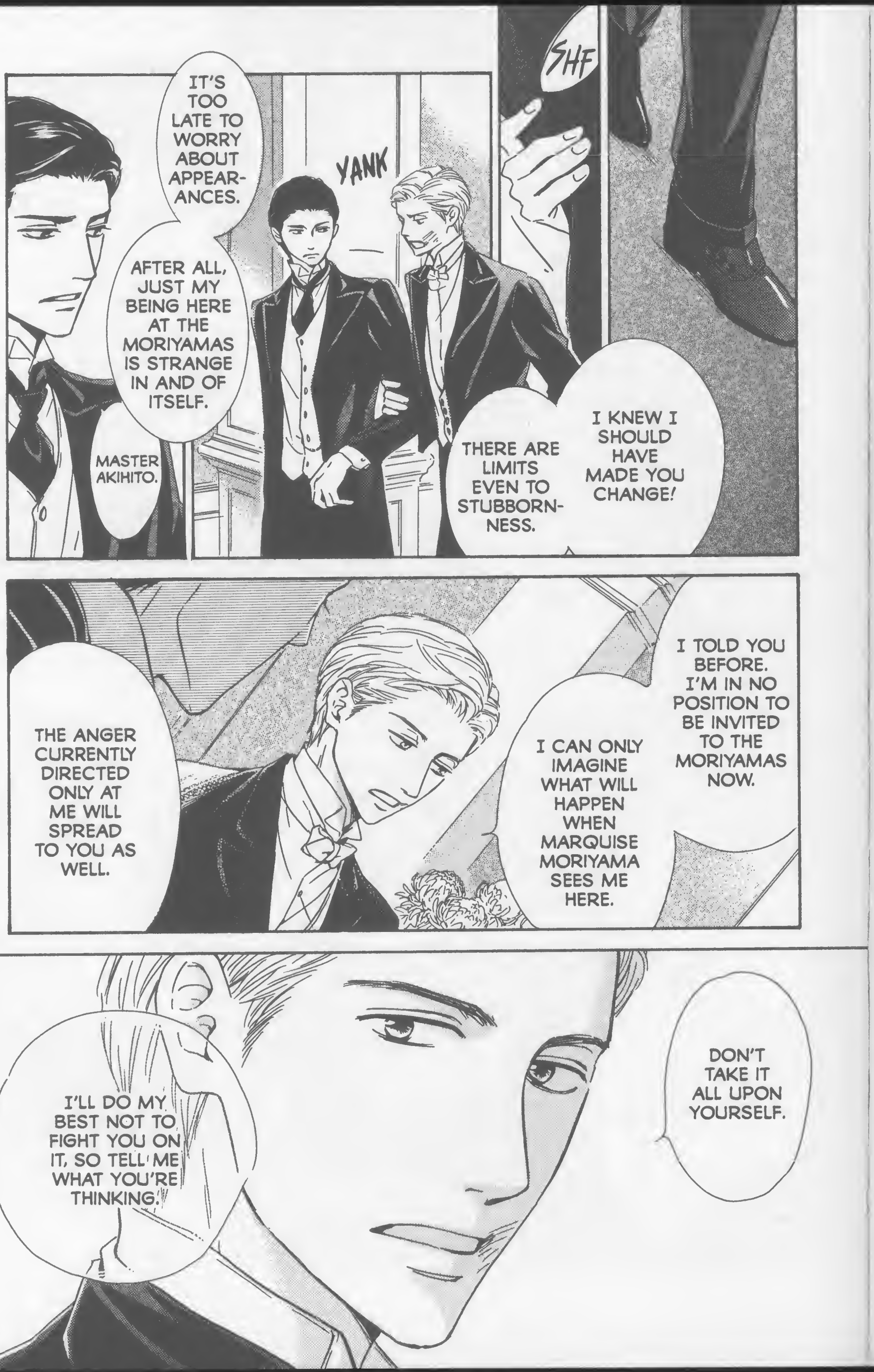
Blue Morning

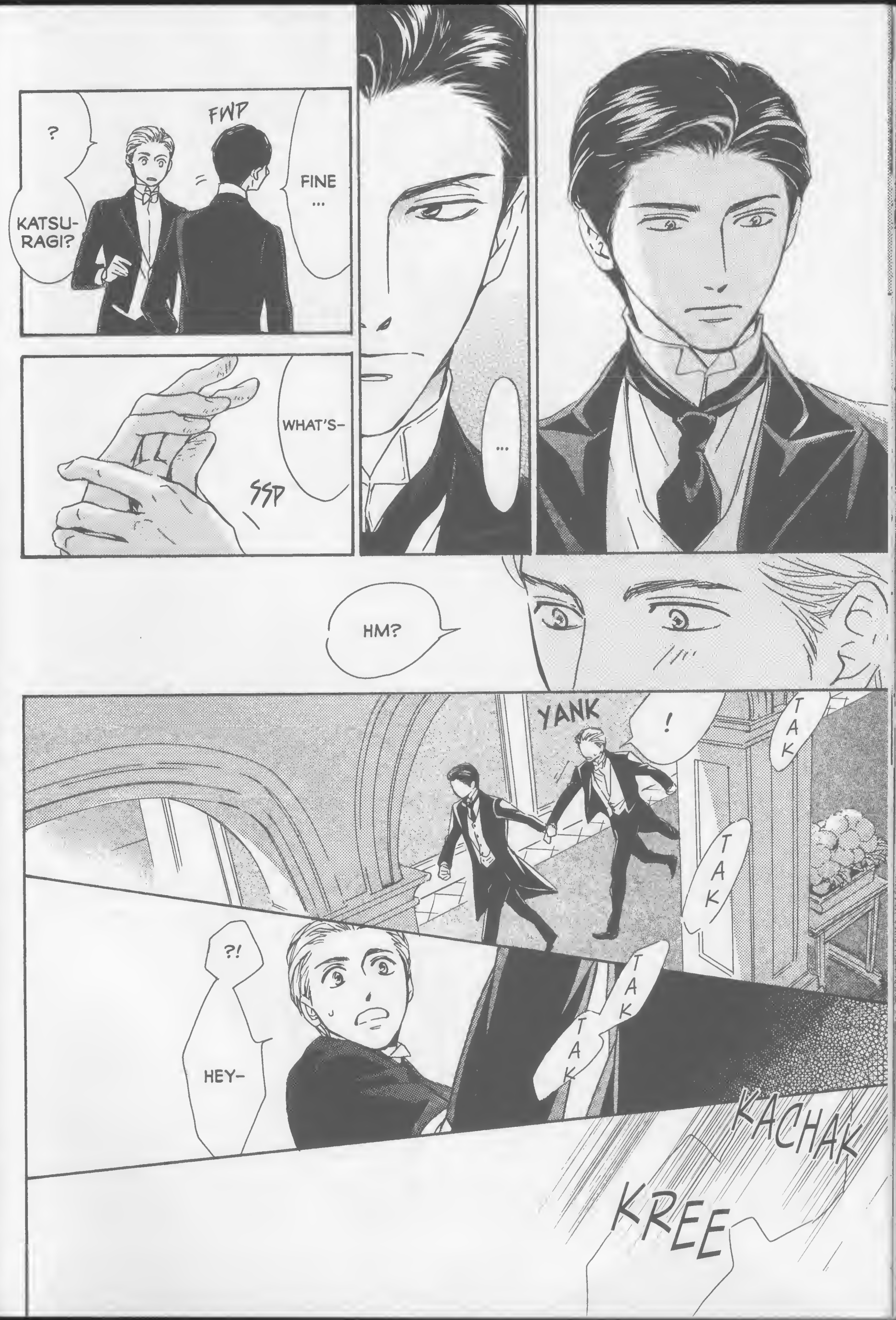
憂鬱な朝

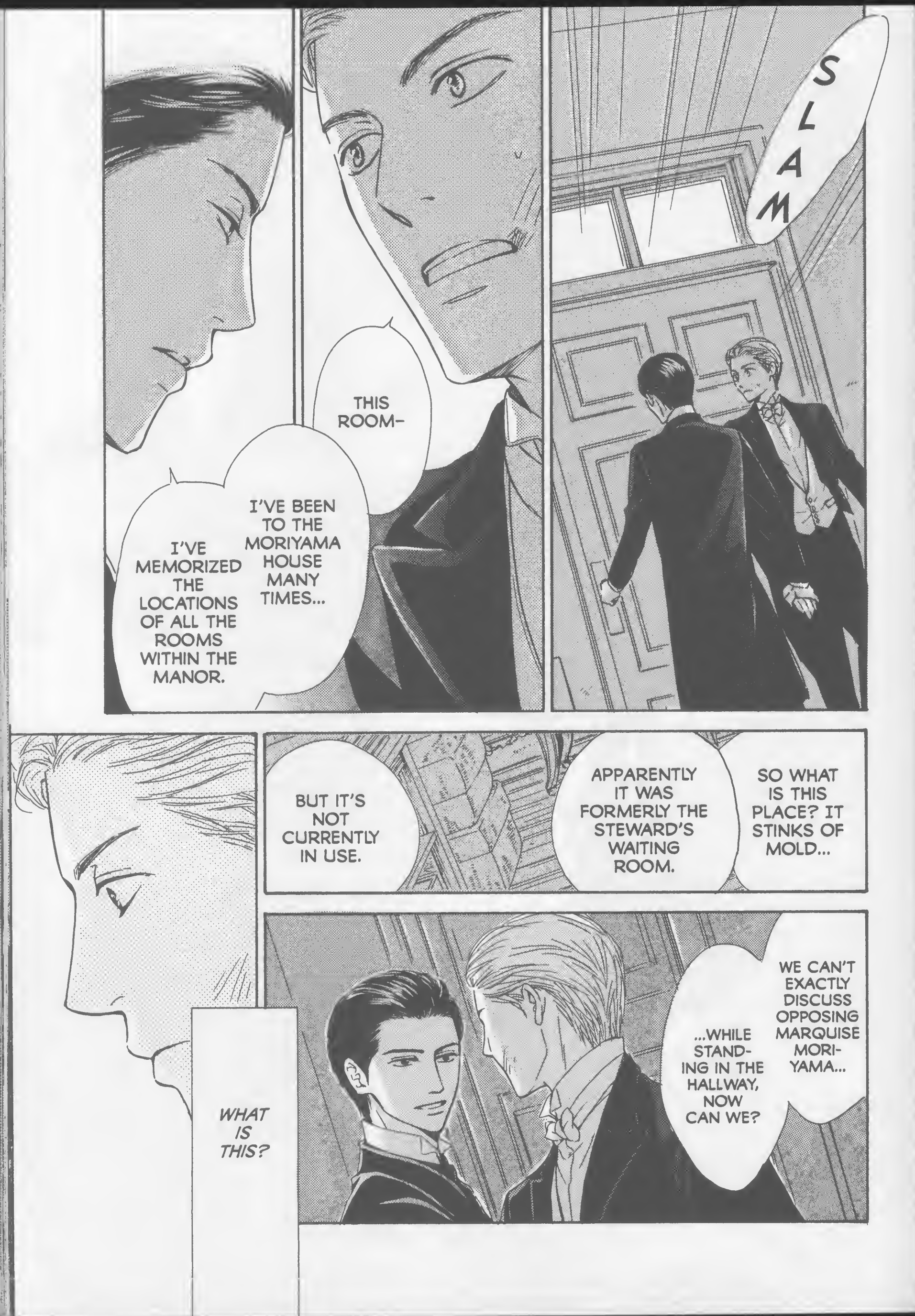

TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI?!
DID THEY REALLY COME TOGETHER IN THE KUZE CARRIAGE?
NO MISTAKE. THAT'S WHAT THE MORIYAMA SERVANT SAID.
KATSURAGI... HE'S THE HEAD CLERK AT THE ISHIZAKIS NOW, ISN'T HE?
SO WHICH POSITION GOT HIM TONIGHT'S INVITE?
THIRD SON OF THE KATSURAGIS, THE KUZE BUTLER, AND NOW A CLERK WITH THE ISHIZAKIS!
YOU GOTTA JUST STAND BACK AND WATCH HOW FAST HE'S MOVING AROUND.
"WHO EXACTLY IS TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI?" WITH THAT ANGLE, OUR PAPER CAN COVER ALL THREE POSITIONS.

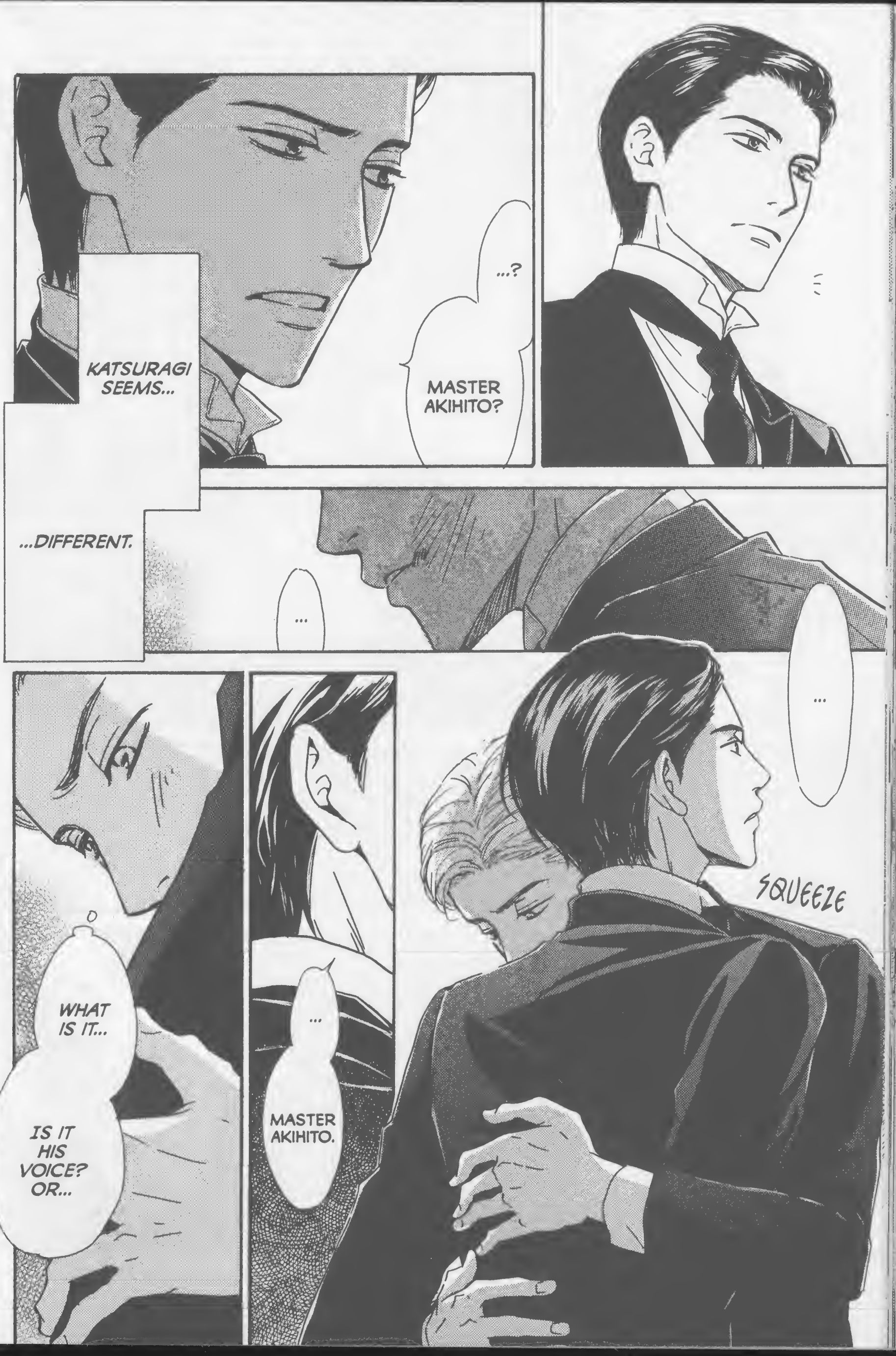

AND IF WE PRINT PLENTY OF PHOTOS SHOWING HOW HANDSOME HE IS, HOUSEWIVES'LL SNAP IT UP TOO.
HA HA HA! OH, THAT'S GOOD! YOU SHOULD DEFINITELY DO THAT.
YOU THINK SO TOO, RIGHT?
BUT IT'S HOPELESS.
AN ARTICLE ON THAT MAN'LL NEVER MAKE IT PAST THE BOSS!
PHOTOS EITHER.
HE'S GOT A HELLUVA NETWORK BEHIND HIM... YOU'LL DEFINITELY GET SHUT DOWN.
TAK

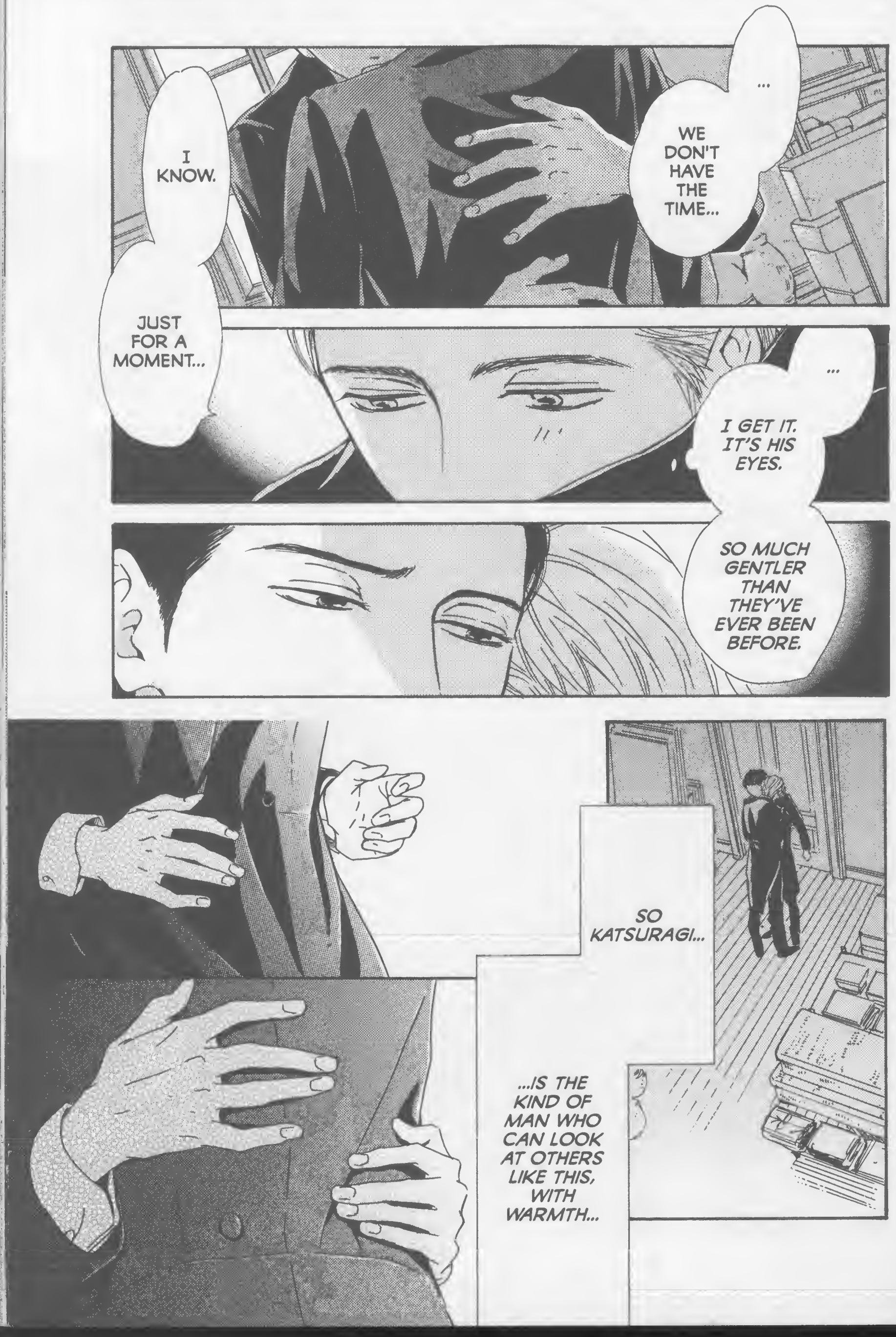

TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
MASTER AKIHITO?
FREEZE
KATSURAGI...
SIGH
DON'T WALK BEHIND ME. COME UP BESIDE ME.
WE CAN'T TALK LIKE THIS.
...
HOW MANY TIMES MUST I SAY IT BEFORE YOU UNDERSTAND?
ALTHOUGH I HAVE ENTERED THE ISHIZAKI HOUSE, I AM, EVEN NOW, YOUR SERVANT.
I HAVE NO INTENTION OF SHOWING MY FACE AT THIS PARTY THIS EVENING, EITHER.
IF ANYONE SEES ME WALKING ALONGSIDE YOU IN THIS OUTFIT, DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY'LL SAY?
...

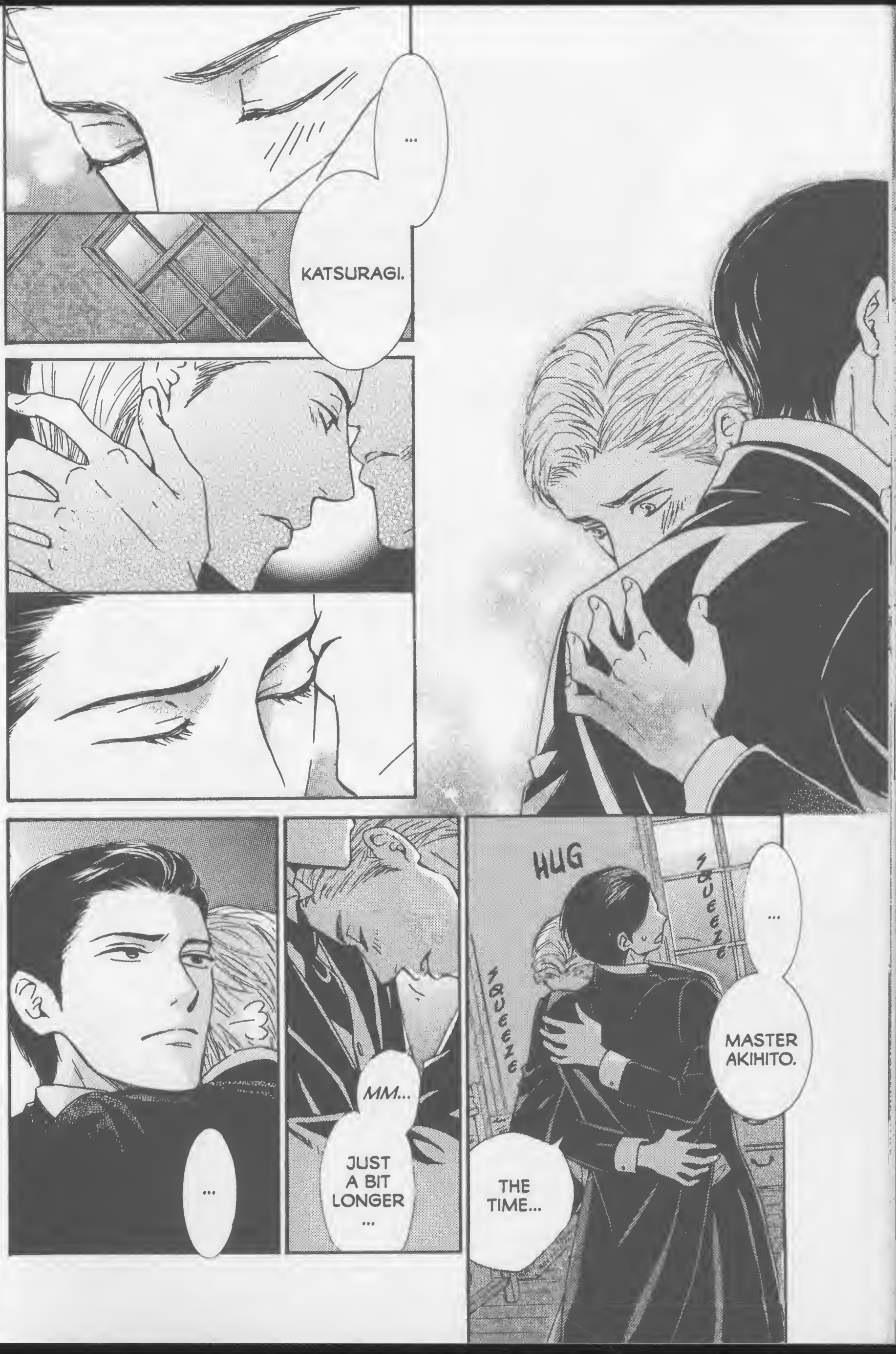

SHF
IT'S TOO LATE TO WORRY ABOUT APPEARANCES.
AFTER ALL, JUST MY BEING HERE AT THE MORIYAMAS IS STRANGE IN AND OF ITSELF.
YANK
I KNEW I SHOULD HAVE MADE YOU CHANGE!
THERE ARE LIMITS EVEN TO STUBBORNNESS.
MASTER AKIHITO.
I TOLD YOU BEFORE. I'M IN NO POSITION TO BE INVITED TO THE MORIYAMAS NOW.
I CAN ONLY IMAGINE WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN MARQUISE MORIYAMA SEES ME HERE.
THE ANGER CURRENTLY DIRECTED ONLY AT ME WILL SPREAD TO YOU AS WELL.
DON'T TAKE IT ALL UPON YOURSELF.
I'LL DO MY BEST NOT TO FIGHT YOU ON IT, SO TELL ME WHAT YOU'RE THINKING.

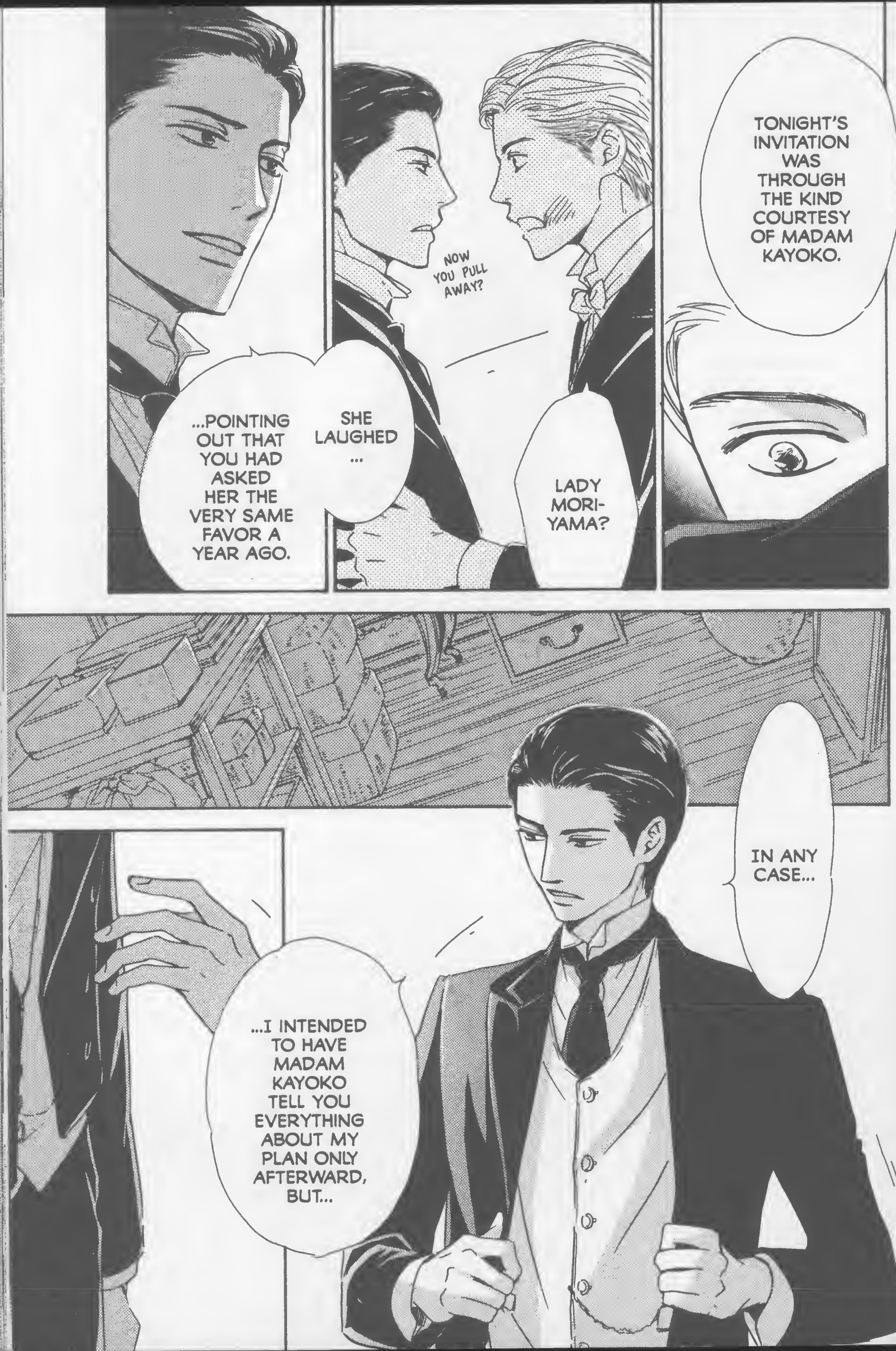

...
FINE ...
FWP
?
KATSURAGI?
WHAT'S–
SSP
HM?
!
YANK
TAK
TAK
?!
HEY–
TAK
TAK
KACHAK
KREE

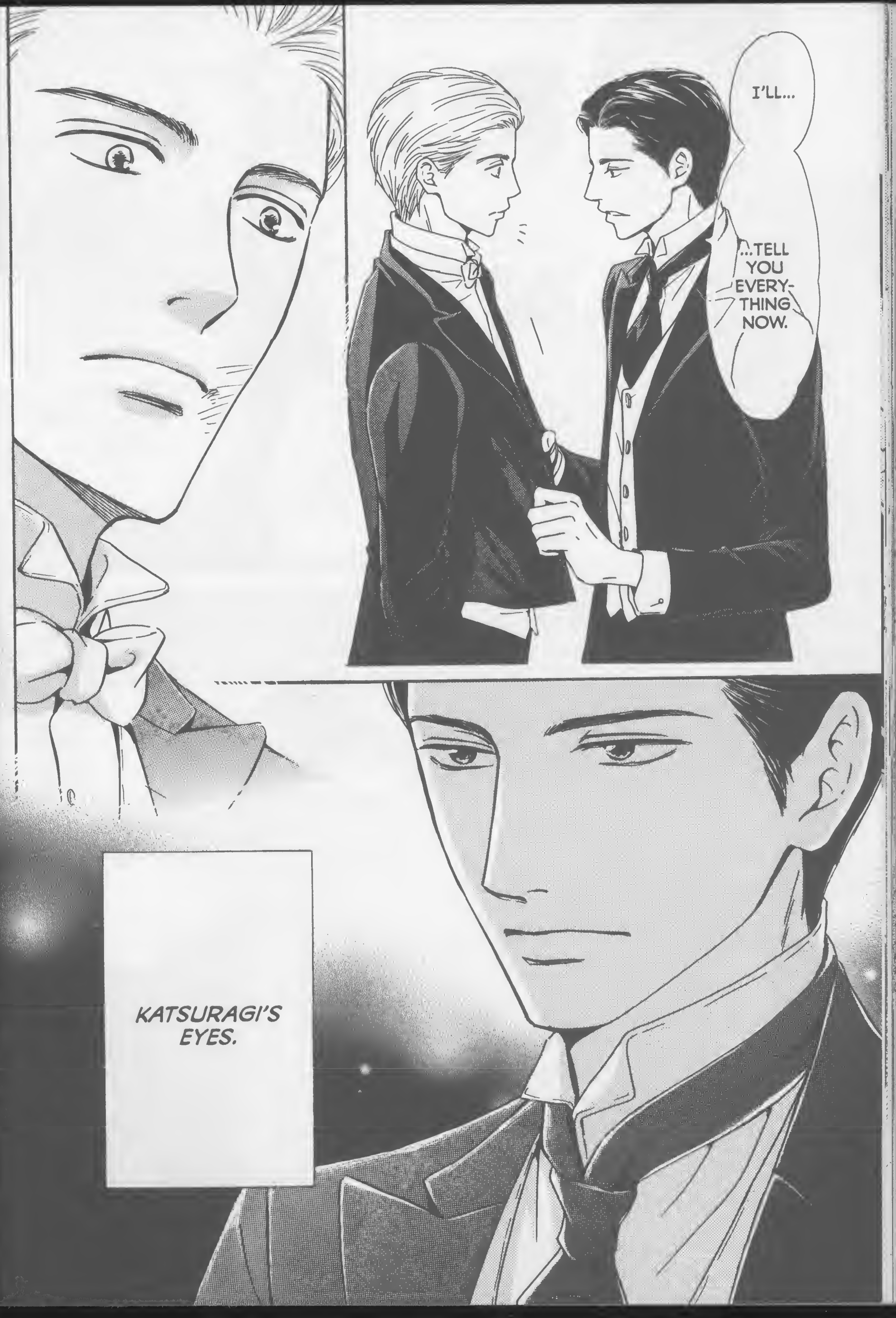

SLAM
THIS ROOM–
I'VE BEEN TO THE MORIYAMA HOUSE MANY TIMES...
I'VE MEMORIZED THE LOCATIONS OF ALL THE ROOMS WITHIN THE MANOR.
SO WHAT IS THIS PLACE? IT STINKS OF MOLD...
APPARENTLY IT WAS FORMERLY THE STEWARD'S WAITING ROOM.
BUT IT'S NOT CURRENTLY IN USE.
WE CAN'T EXACTLY DISCUSS OPPOSING MARQUISE MORIYAMA...
...WHILE STANDING IN THE HALLWAY, NOW CAN WE?
WHAT IS THIS?

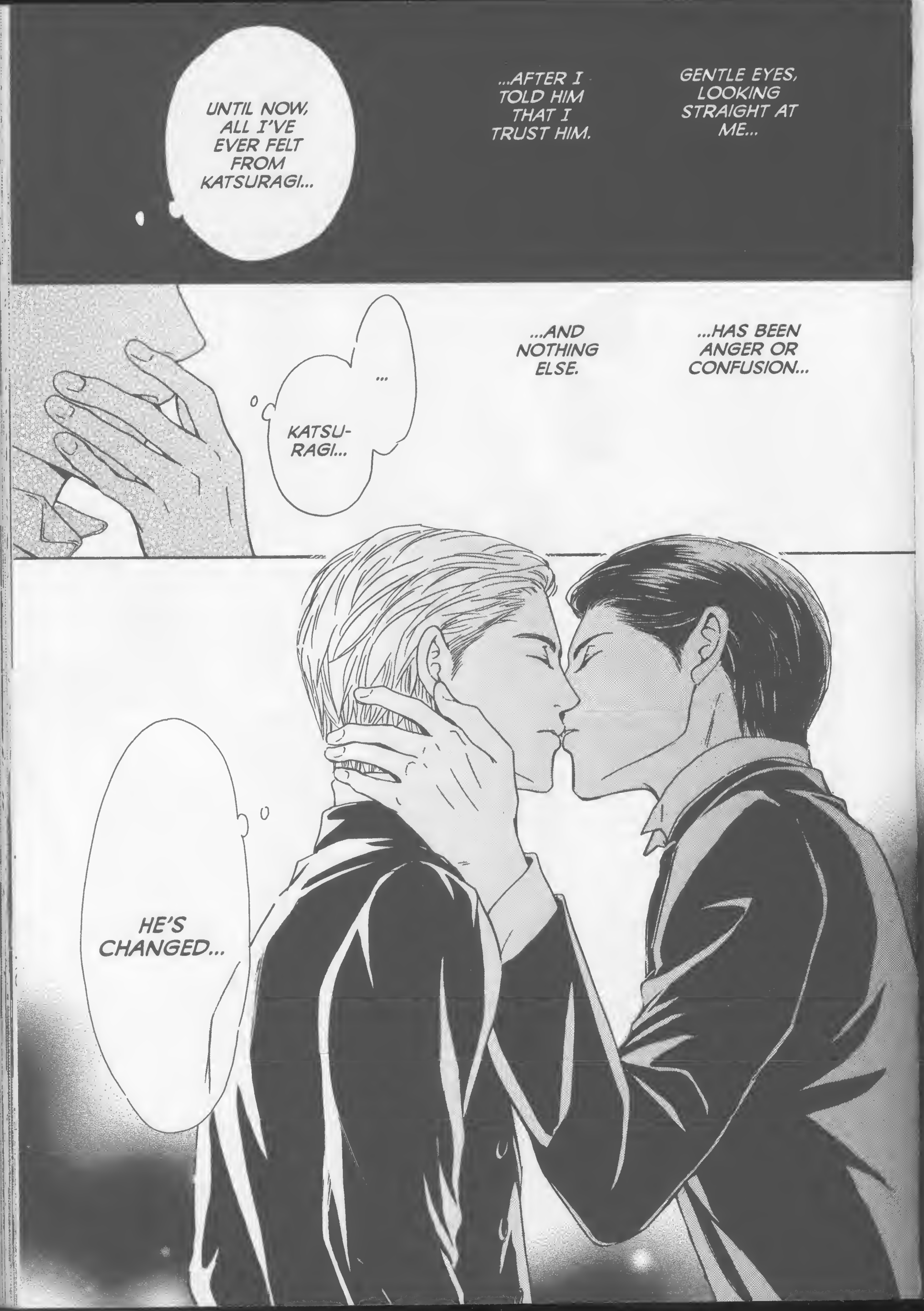

...?
MASTER AKIHITO?
KATSURAGI SEEMS...
...DIFFERENT.
...
...
SQUEEZE
...
MASTER AKIHITO.
WHAT IS IT...
IS IT HIS VOICE? OR...

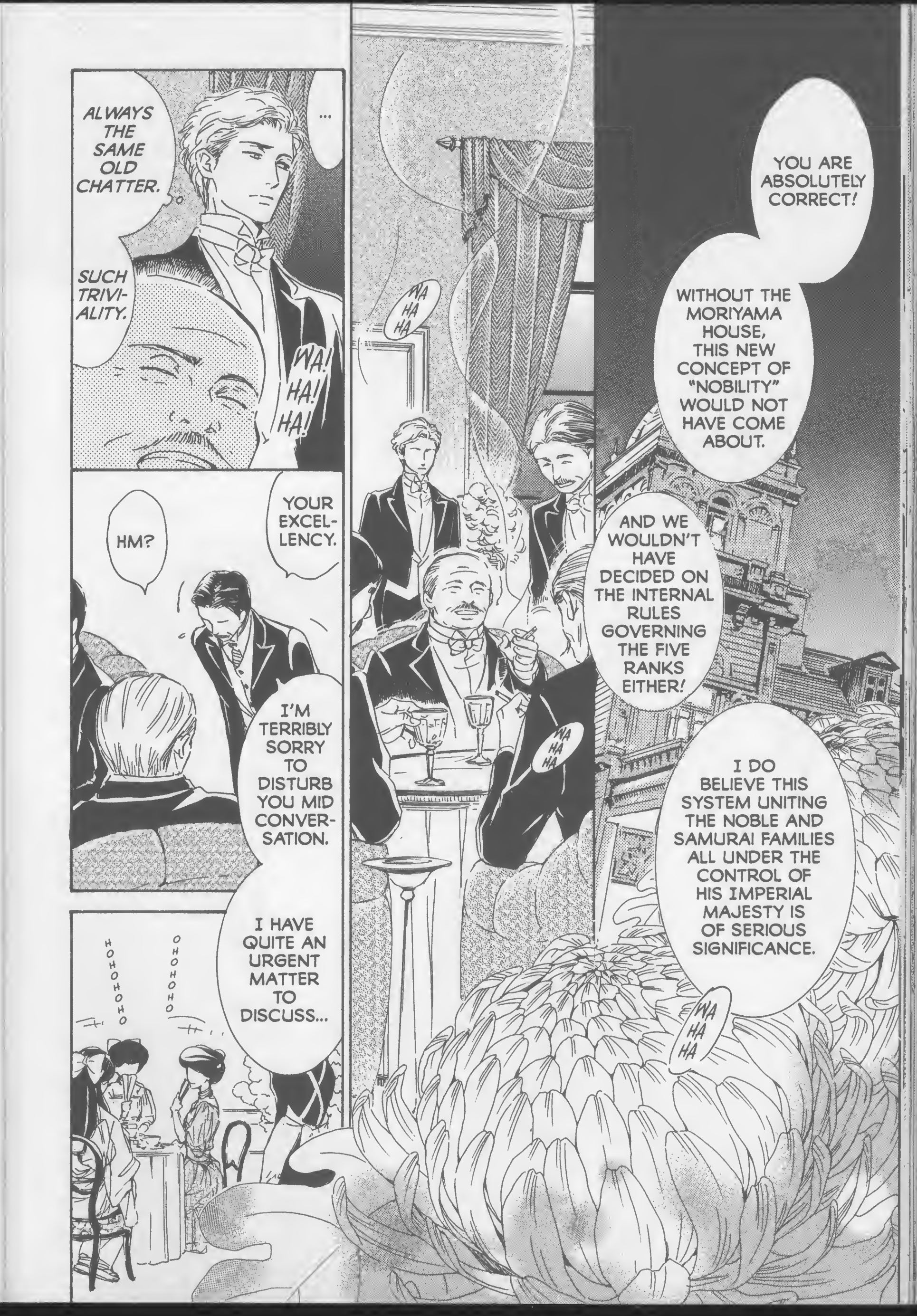

...
WE DON'T HAVE THE TIME...
I KNOW.
JUST FOR A MOMENT...
...
I GET IT. IT'S HIS EYES.
SO MUCH GENTLER THAN THEY'VE EVER BEEN BEFORE.
SO KATSURAGI...
...IS THE KIND OF MAN WHO CAN LOOK AT OTHERS LIKE THIS, WITH WARMTH...

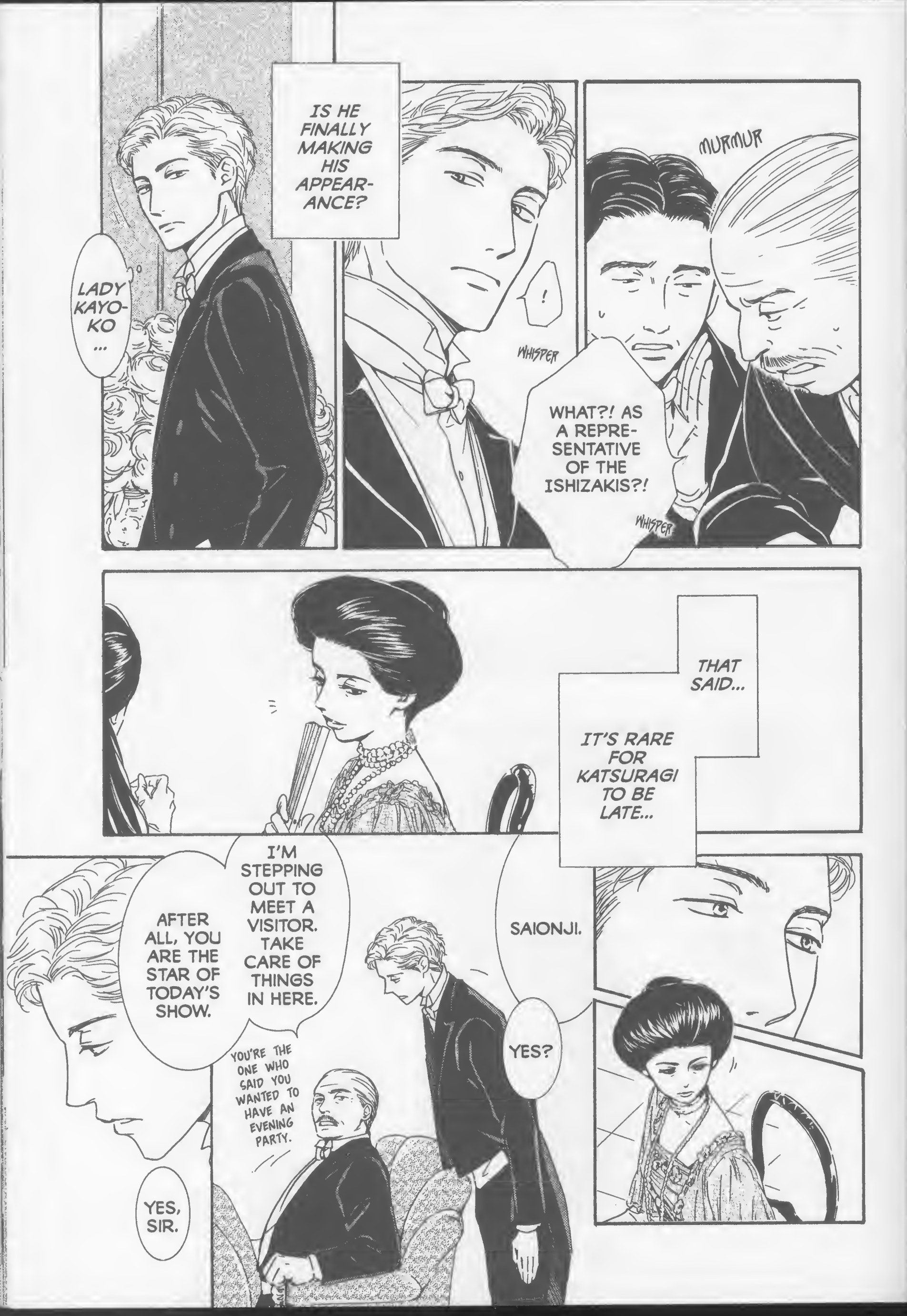

...
KATSURAGI.
...
MASTER AKIHITO.
HUG
SQUEEZE
SQUEEZE
THE TIME...
MM...
JUST A BIT LONGER ...
...

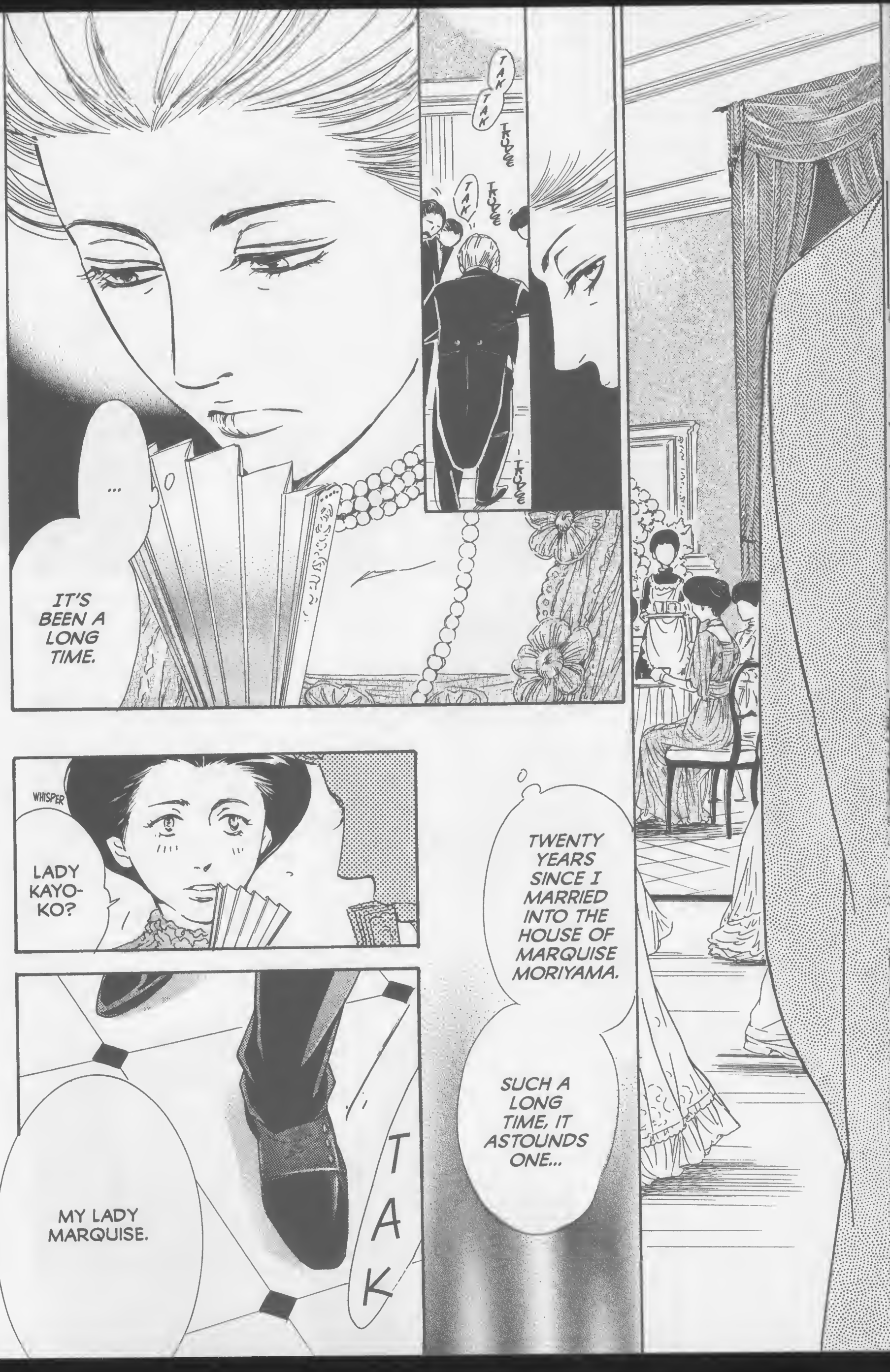

TONIGHT'S INVITATION WAS THROUGH THE KIND COURTESY OF MADAM KAYOKO.
LADY MORIYAMA?
NOW YOU PULL AWAY?
SHE LAUGHED ...
...POINTING OUT THAT YOU HAD ASKED HER THE VERY SAME FAVOR A YEAR AGO.
IN ANY CASE...
...I INTENDED TO HAVE MADAM KAYOKO TELL YOU EVERYTHING ABOUT MY PLAN ONLY AFTERWARD, BUT...

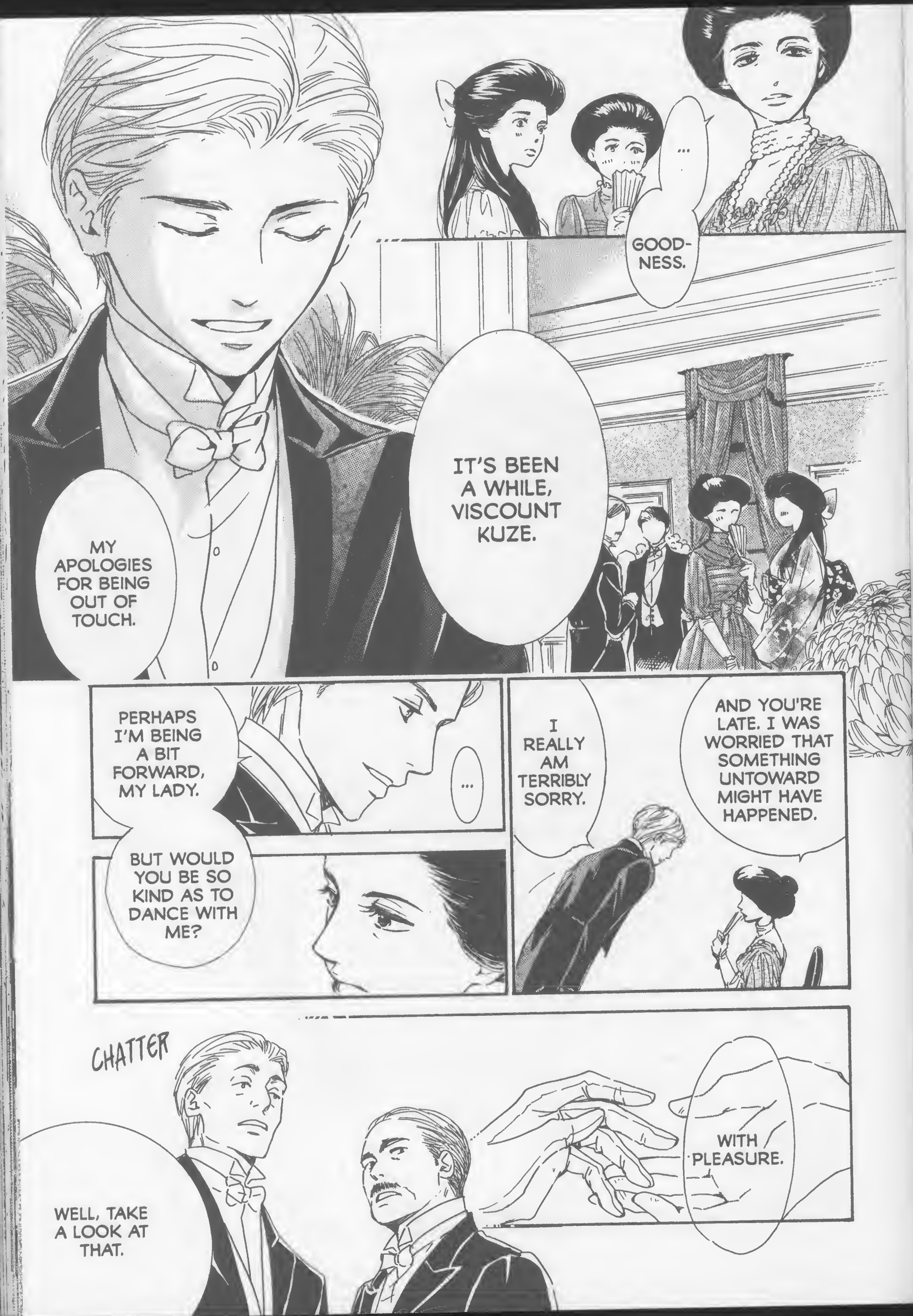

I'LL...
...TELL YOU EVERYTHING NOW.
KATSURAGI'S EYES.

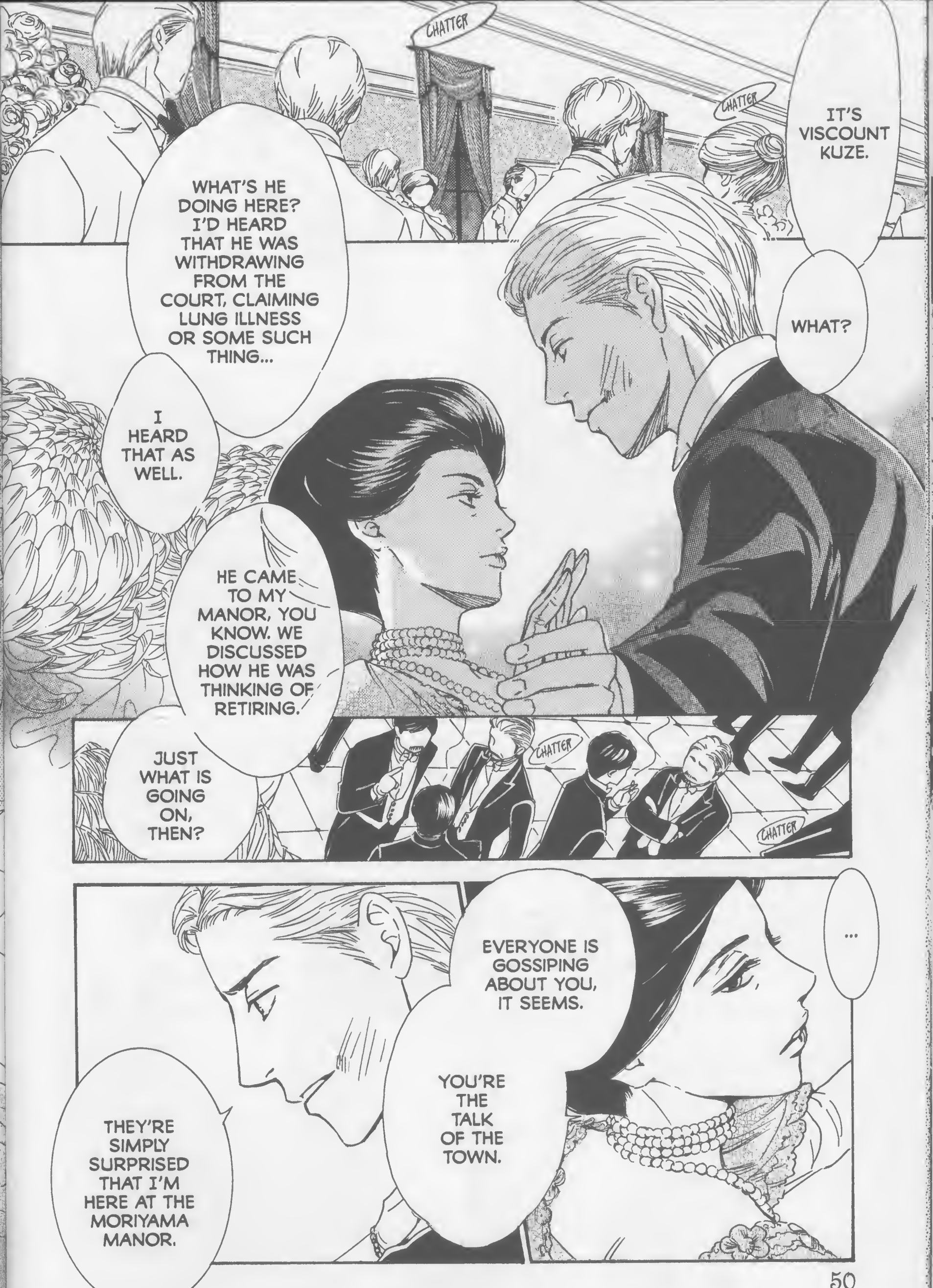

GENTLE EYES, LOOKING STRAIGHT AT ME...
...AFTER I TOLD HIM THAT I TRUST HIM.
UNTIL NOW, ALL I'VE EVER FELT FROM KATSURAGI...
...HAS BEEN ANGER OR CONFUSION...
...AND NOTHING ELSE.
...
KATSURAGI...
HE'S CHANGED...

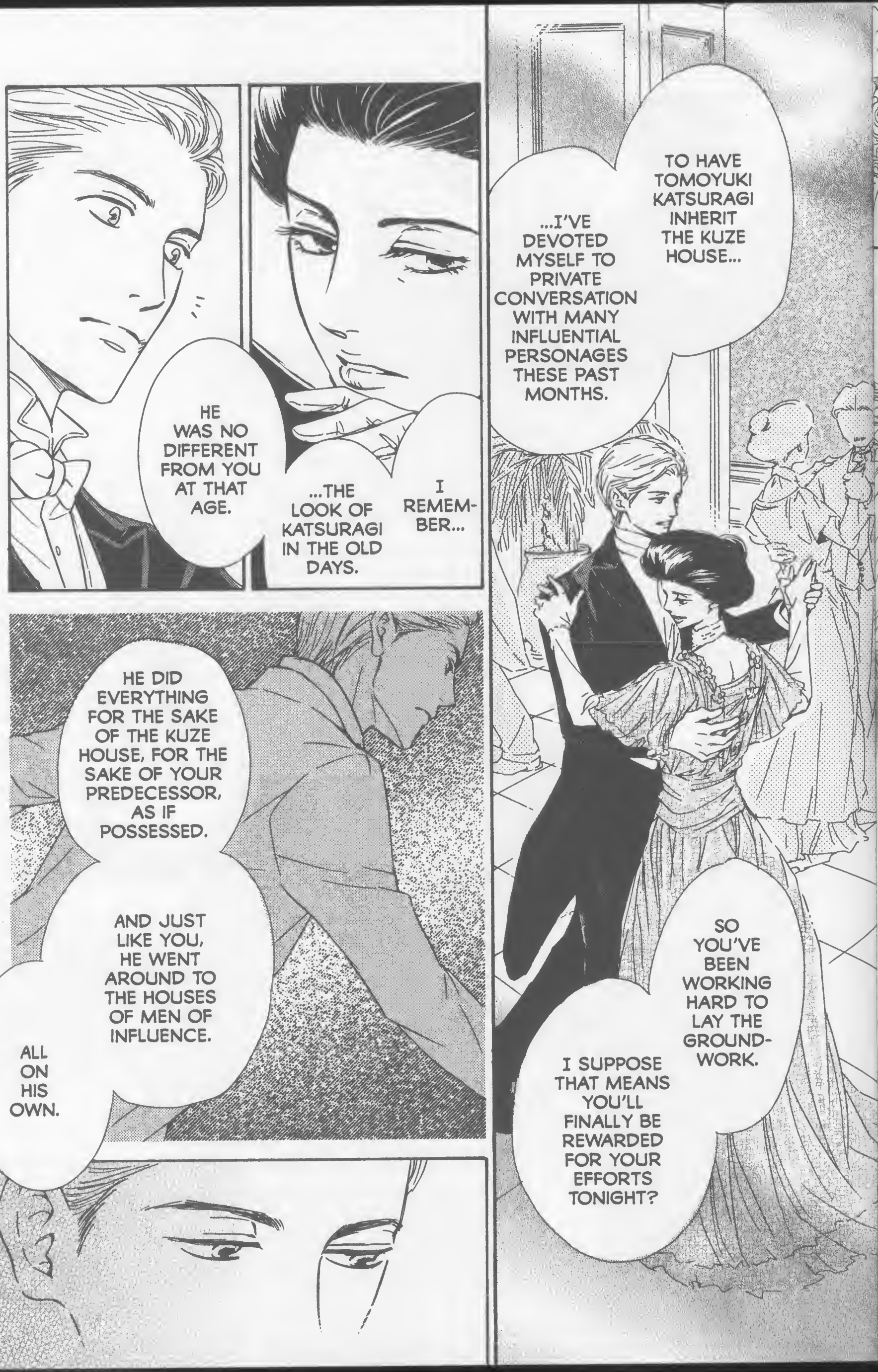

YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY CORRECT!
WITHOUT THE MORIYAMA HOUSE, THIS NEW CONCEPT OF "NOBILITY" WOULD NOT HAVE COME ABOUT.
AND WE WOULDN'T HAVE DECIDED ON THE INTERNAL RULES GOVERNING THE FIVE RANKS EITHER!
I DO BELIEVE THIS SYSTEM UNITING THE NOBLE AND SAMURAI FAMILIES ALL UNDER THE CONTROL OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY IS OF SERIOUS SIGNIFICANCE.
WA HA HA
WA HA HA
WA HA HA
...
ALWAYS THE SAME OLD CHATTER.
SUCH TRIVIALITY.
WA! HA! HA!
YOUR EXCELLENCY.
HM?
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY TO DISTURB YOU MID CONVERSATION.
I HAVE QUITE AN URGENT MATTER TO DISCUSS...
OHOHOHO
HOHOHOHO

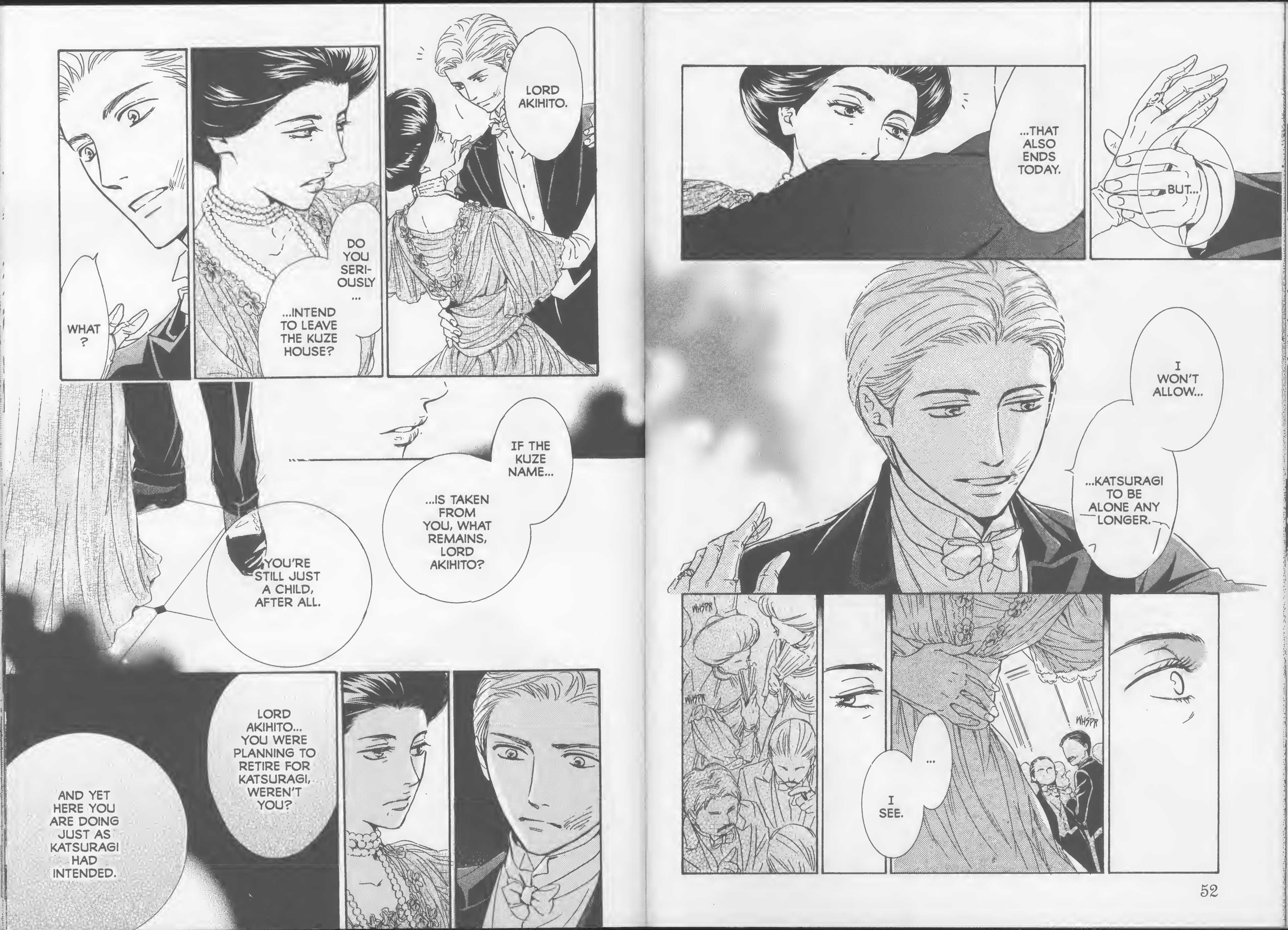

MURMUR
WHAT?! AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ISHIZAKIS?!
WHISPER
WHISPER
!
IS HE FINALLY MAKING HIS APPEARANCE?
LADY KAYOKO ...
THAT SAID...
IT'S RARE FOR KATSURAGI TO BE LATE...
SAIONJI.
YES?
I'M STEPPING OUT TO MEET A VISITOR. TAKE CARE OF THINGS IN HERE.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SAID YOU WANTED TO HAVE AN EVENING PARTY.
AFTER ALL, YOU ARE THE STAR OF TODAY'S SHOW.
YES, SIR.

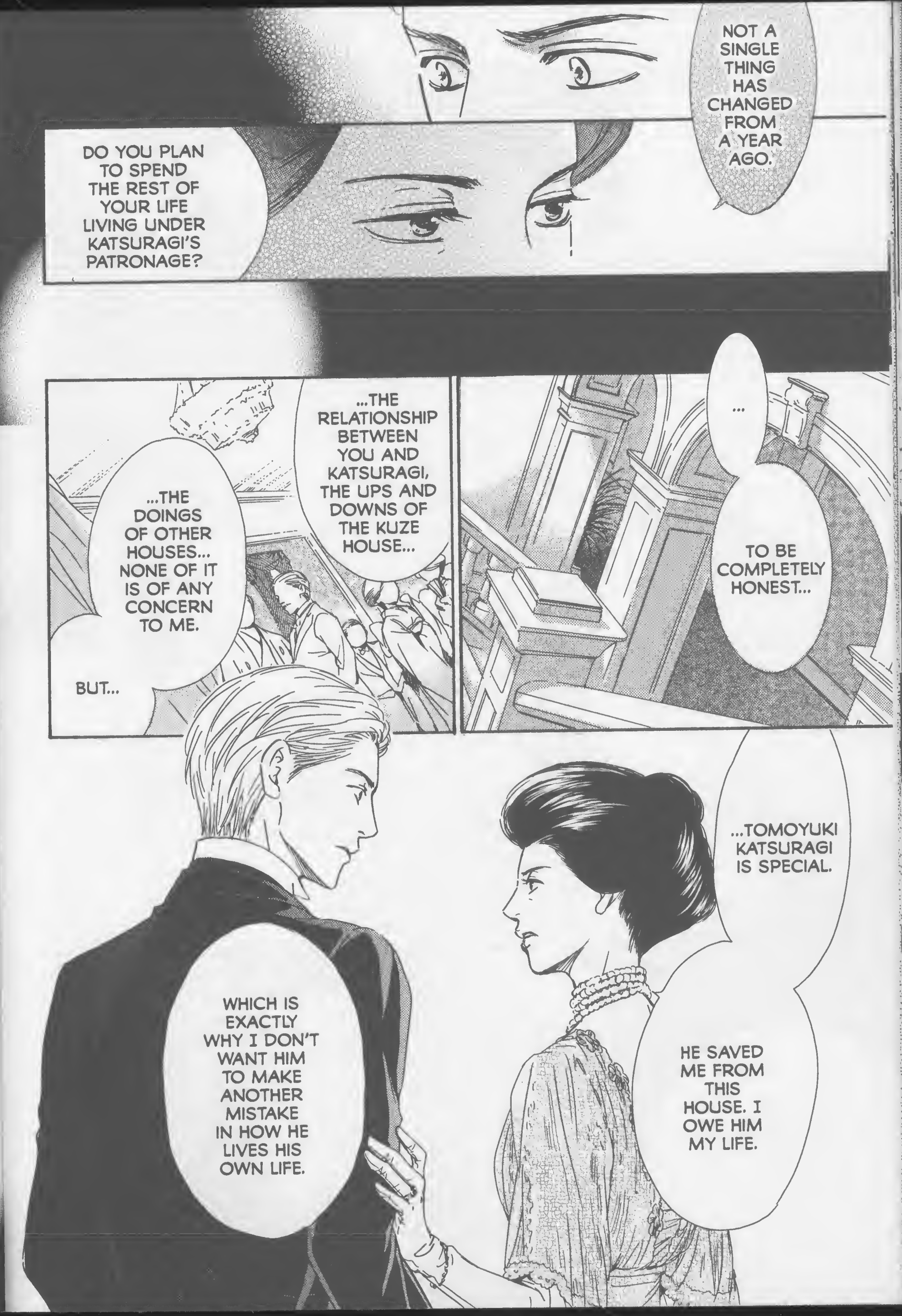

TAN TAN
THUDE THUDE
TAN
THUDE
...
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.
TWENTY YEARS SINCE I MARRIED INTO THE HOUSE OF MARQUISE MORIYAMA.
SUCH A LONG TIME, IT ASTOUNDS ONE...
WHISPER
LADY KAYOKO?
MY LADY MARQUISE.
TAK

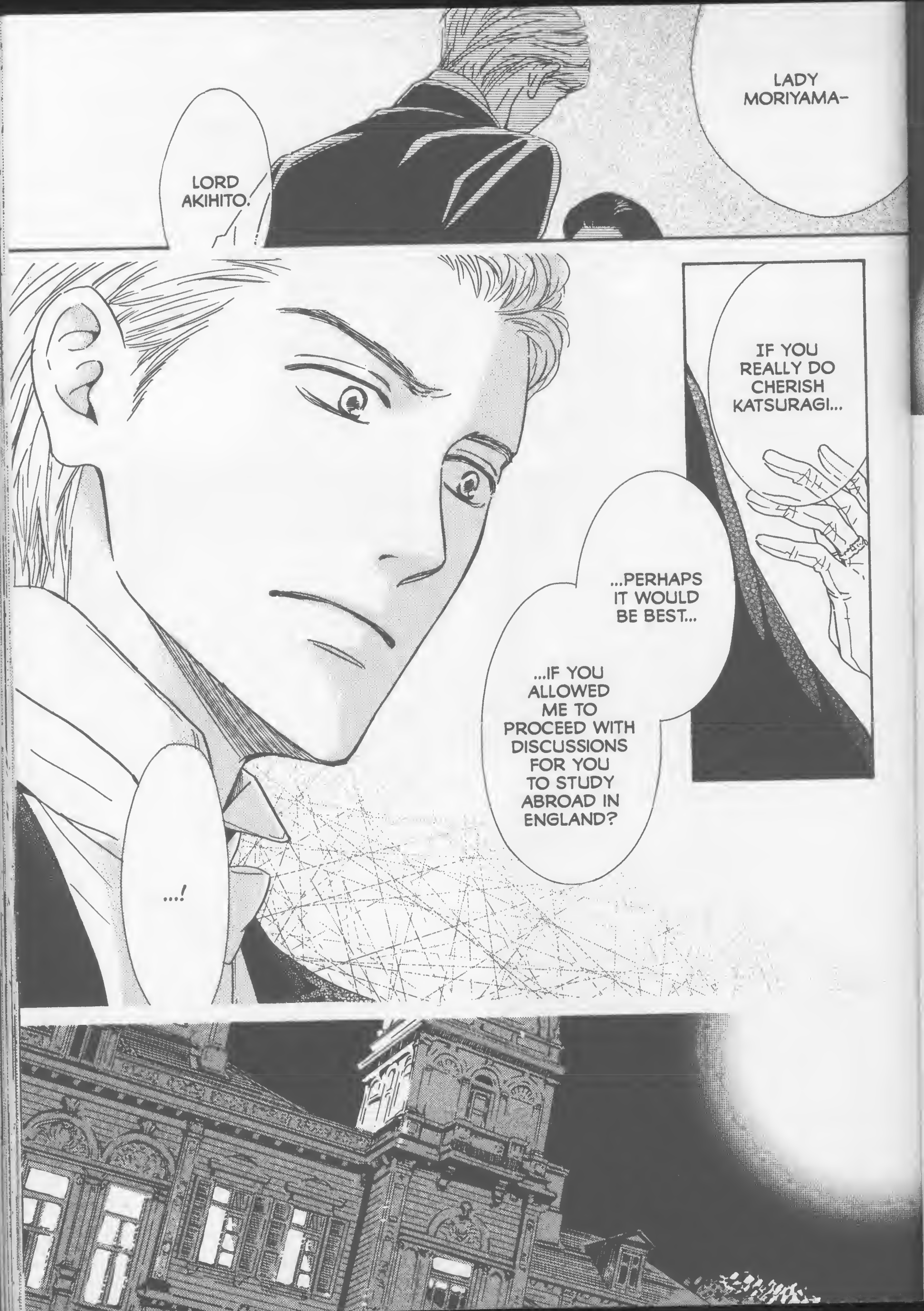

...
GOODNESS.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, VISCOUNT KUZE.
MY APOLOGIES FOR BEING OUT OF TOUCH.
AND YOU'RE LATE. I WAS WORRIED THAT SOMETHING UNTOWARD MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED.
I REALLY AM TERRIBLY SORRY.
...
PERHAPS I'M BEING A BIT FORWARD, MY LADY.
BUT WOULD YOU BE SO KIND AS TO DANCE WITH ME?
WITH PLEASURE.
CHATTER
WELL, TAKE A LOOK AT THAT.

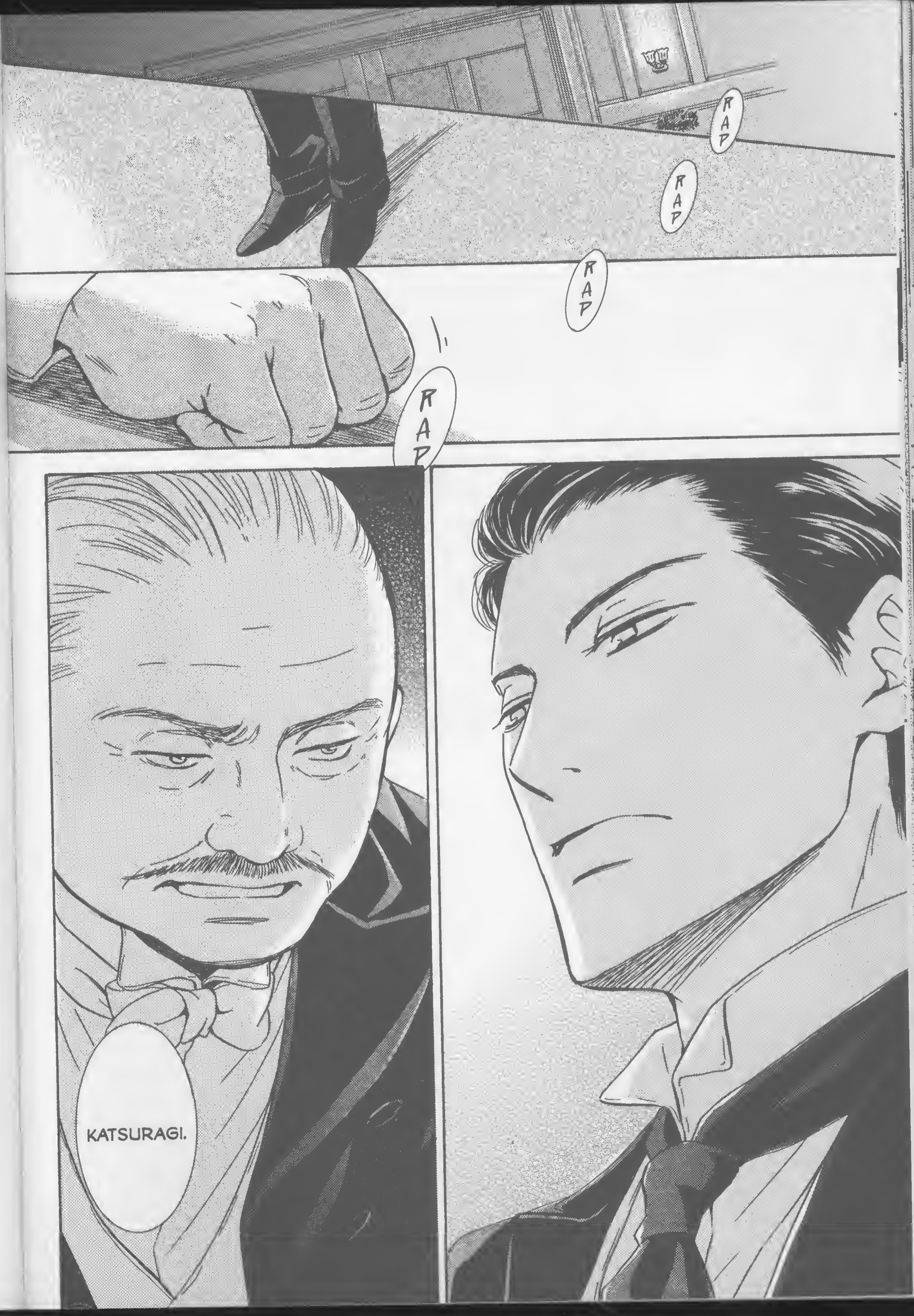

CHATTER
CHATTER
IT'S VISCOUNT KUZE.
WHAT'S HE DOING HERE? I'D HEARD THAT HE WAS WITHDRAWING FROM THE COURT, CLAIMING LUNG ILLNESS OR SOME SUCH THING...
I HEARD THAT AS WELL.
WHAT?
HE CAME TO MY MANOR, YOU KNOW. WE DISCUSSED HOW HE WAS THINKING OF RETIRING.
JUST WHAT IS GOING ON, THEN?
CHATTER
CHATTER
...
EVERYONE IS GOSSIPING ABOUT YOU, IT SEEMS.
YOU'RE THE TALK OF THE TOWN.
THEY'RE SIMPLY SURPRISED THAT I'M HERE AT THE MORIYAMA MANOR.

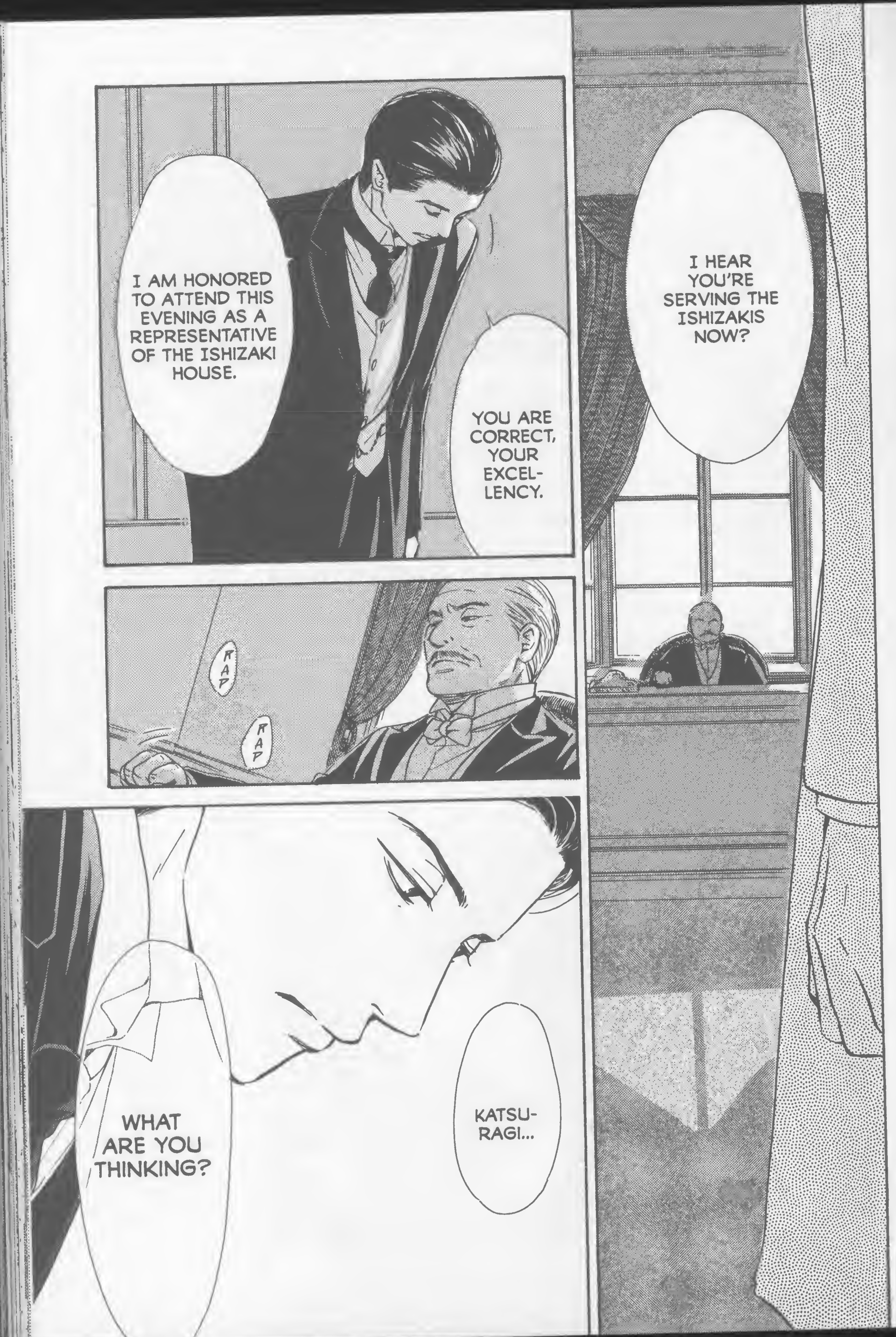

TO HAVE TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI INHERIT THE KUZE HOUSE...
...I'VE DEVOTED MYSELF TO PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH MANY INFLUENTIAL PERSONAGES THESE PAST MONTHS.
SO YOU'VE BEEN WORKING HARD TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK.
I SUPPOSE THAT MEANS YOU'LL FINALLY BE REWARDED FOR YOUR EFFORTS TONIGHT?
I REMEMBER...
...THE LOOK OF KATSURAGI IN THE OLD DAYS.
HE WAS NO DIFFERENT FROM YOU AT THAT AGE.
HE DID EVERYTHING FOR THE SAKE OF THE KUZE HOUSE, FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR PREDECESSOR, AS IF POSSESSED.
AND JUST LIKE YOU, HE WENT AROUND TO THE HOUSES OF MEN OF INFLUENCE.
ALL ON HIS OWN.

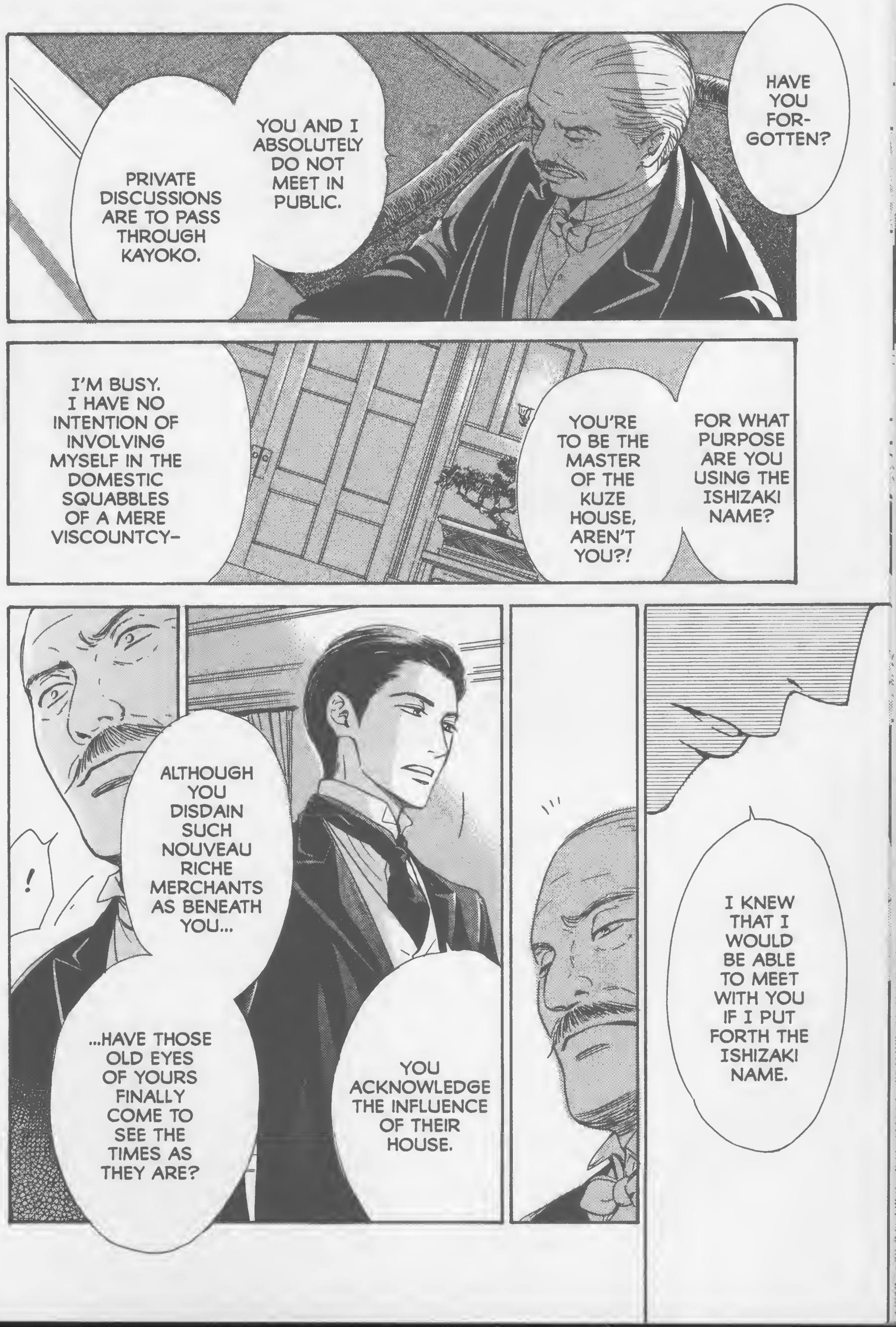

LORD AKIHITO.
DO YOU SERIOUSLY...
...INTEND TO LEAVE THE KUZE HOUSE?
WHAT?
IF THE KUZE NAME...
...IS TAKEN FROM YOU, WHAT REMAINS, LORD AKIHITO?
YOU'RE STILL JUST A CHILD, AFTER ALL.
LORD AKIHITO... YOU WERE PLANNING TO RETIRE FOR KATSURAGI, WEREN'T YOU?
AND YET HERE YOU ARE DOING JUST AS KATSURAGI HAD INTENDED.
BUT...
...THAT ALSO ENDS TODAY.
I WON'T ALLOW...
...KATSURAGI TO BE ALONE ANY LONGER.
...
I SEE.
WHSPR
WHSPR
WHSPR

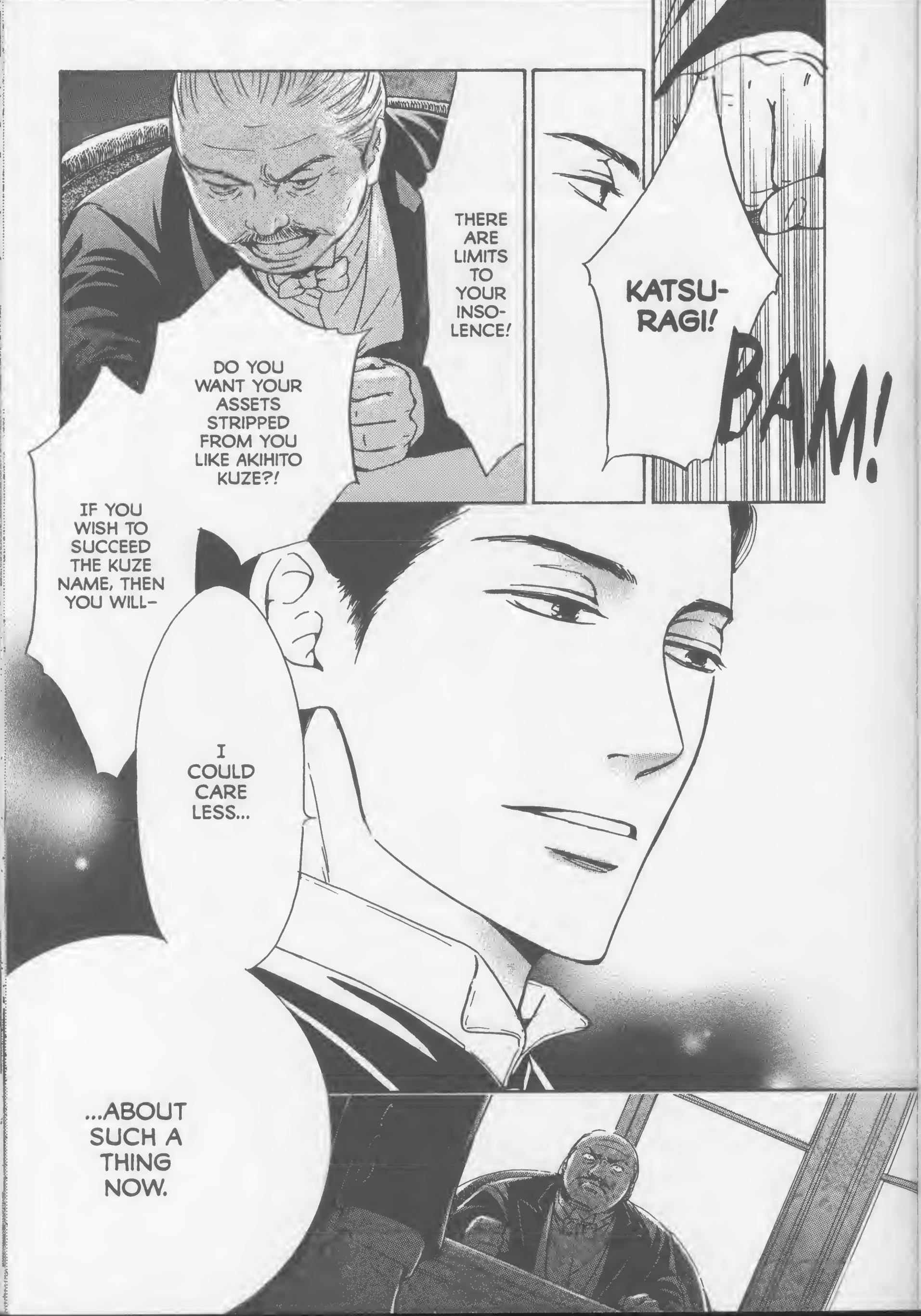

NOT A SINGLE THING HAS CHANGED FROM A YEAR AGO.
DO YOU PLAN TO SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIFE LIVING UNDER KATSURAGI'S PATRONAGE?
...
TO BE COMPLETELY HONEST...
...THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOU AND KATSURAGI, THE UPS AND DOWNS OF THE KUZE HOUSE...
...THE DOINGS OF OTHER HOUSES... NONE OF IT IS OF ANY CONCERN TO ME.
BUT...
...TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI IS SPECIAL.
HE SAVED ME FROM THIS HOUSE. I OWE HIM MY LIFE.
WHICH IS EXACTLY WHY I DON'T WANT HIM TO MAKE ANOTHER MISTAKE IN HOW HE LIVES HIS OWN LIFE.

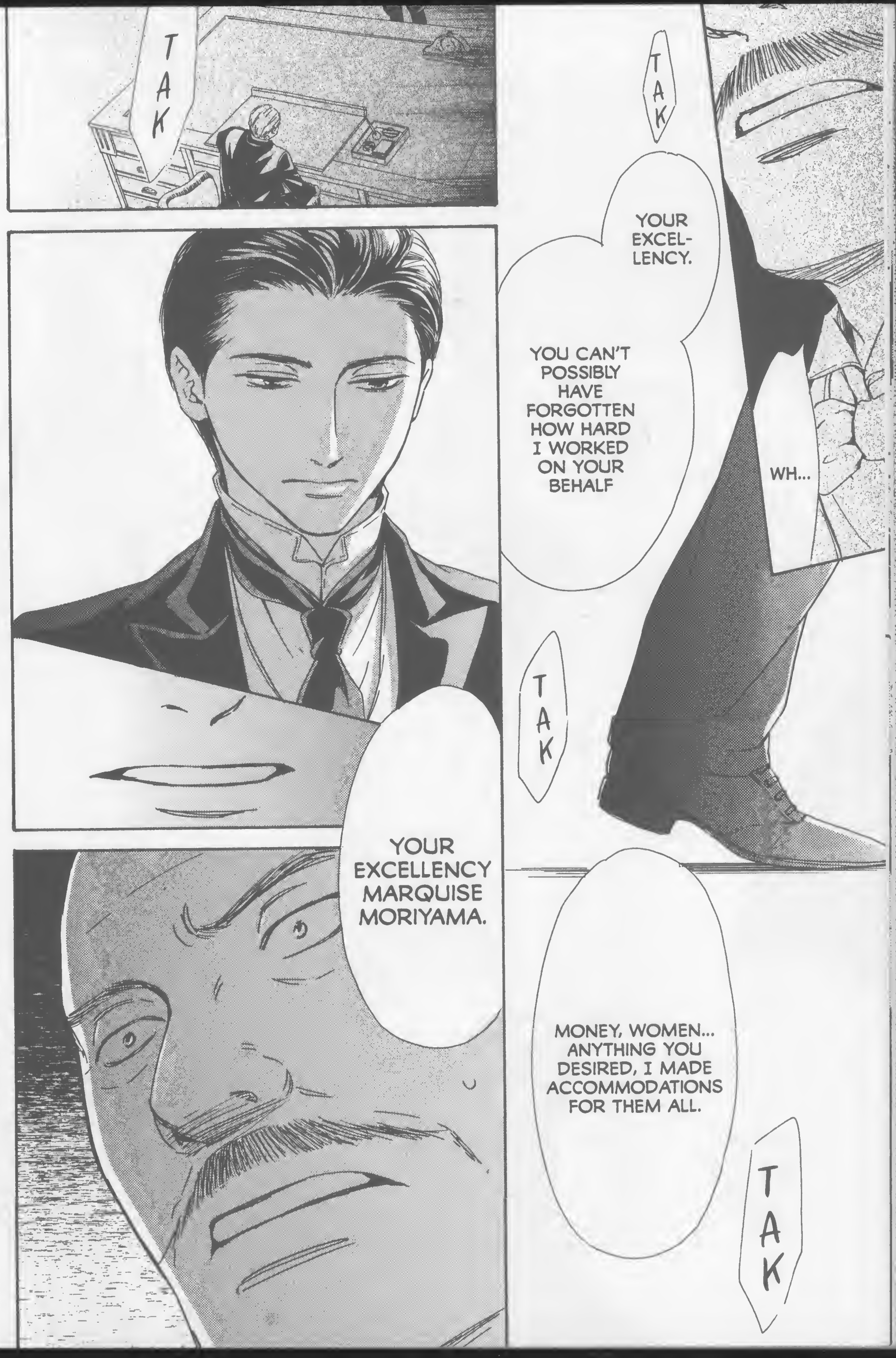

LADY MORIYAMA—
LORD AKIHITO.
IF YOU REALLY DO CHERISH KATSURAGI...
...PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BEST...
...IF YOU ALLOWED ME TO PROCEED WITH DISCUSSIONS FOR YOU TO STUDY ABROAD IN ENGLAND?
...!

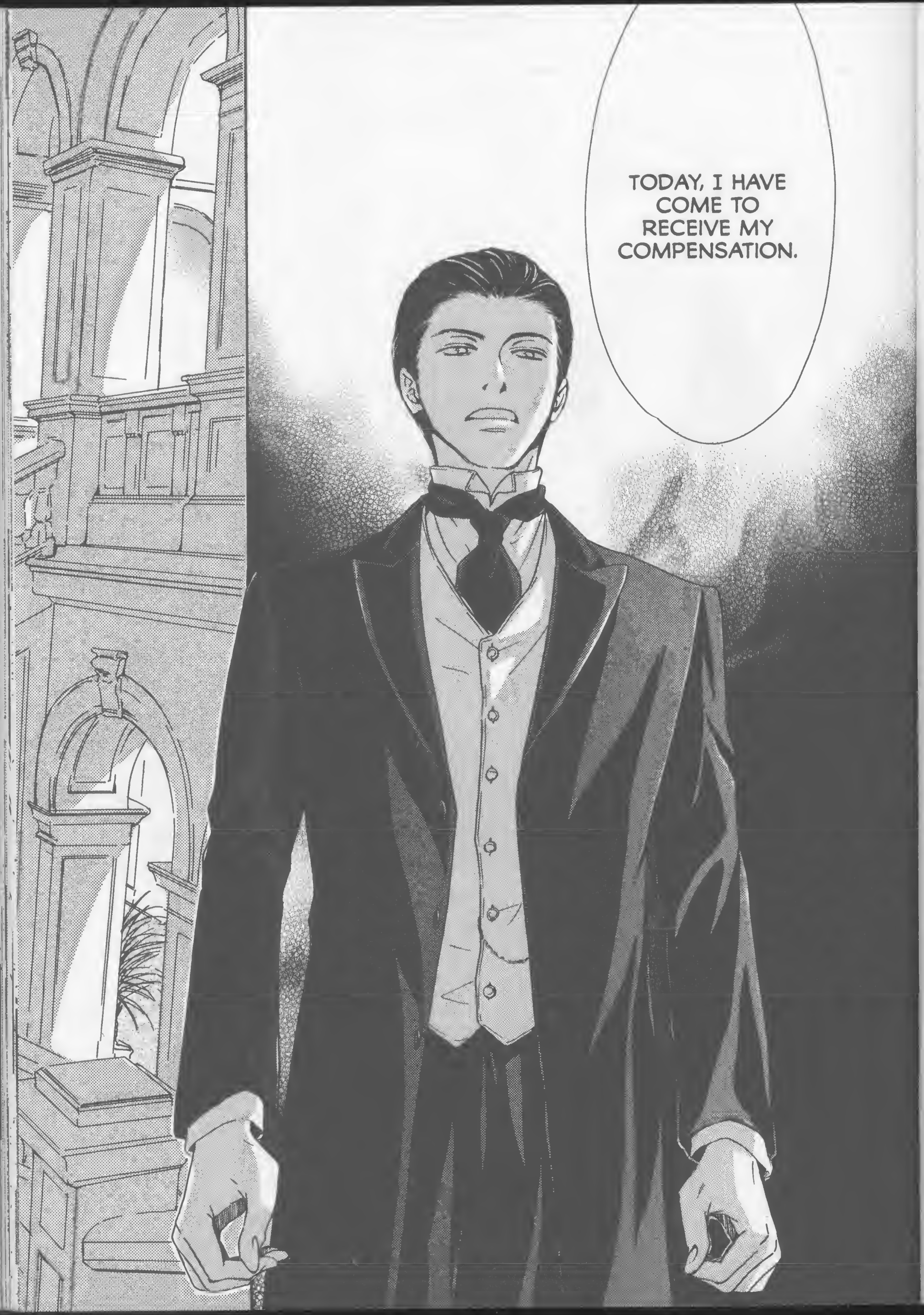

RAP
RAP
RAP
RAP
KATSURAGI.

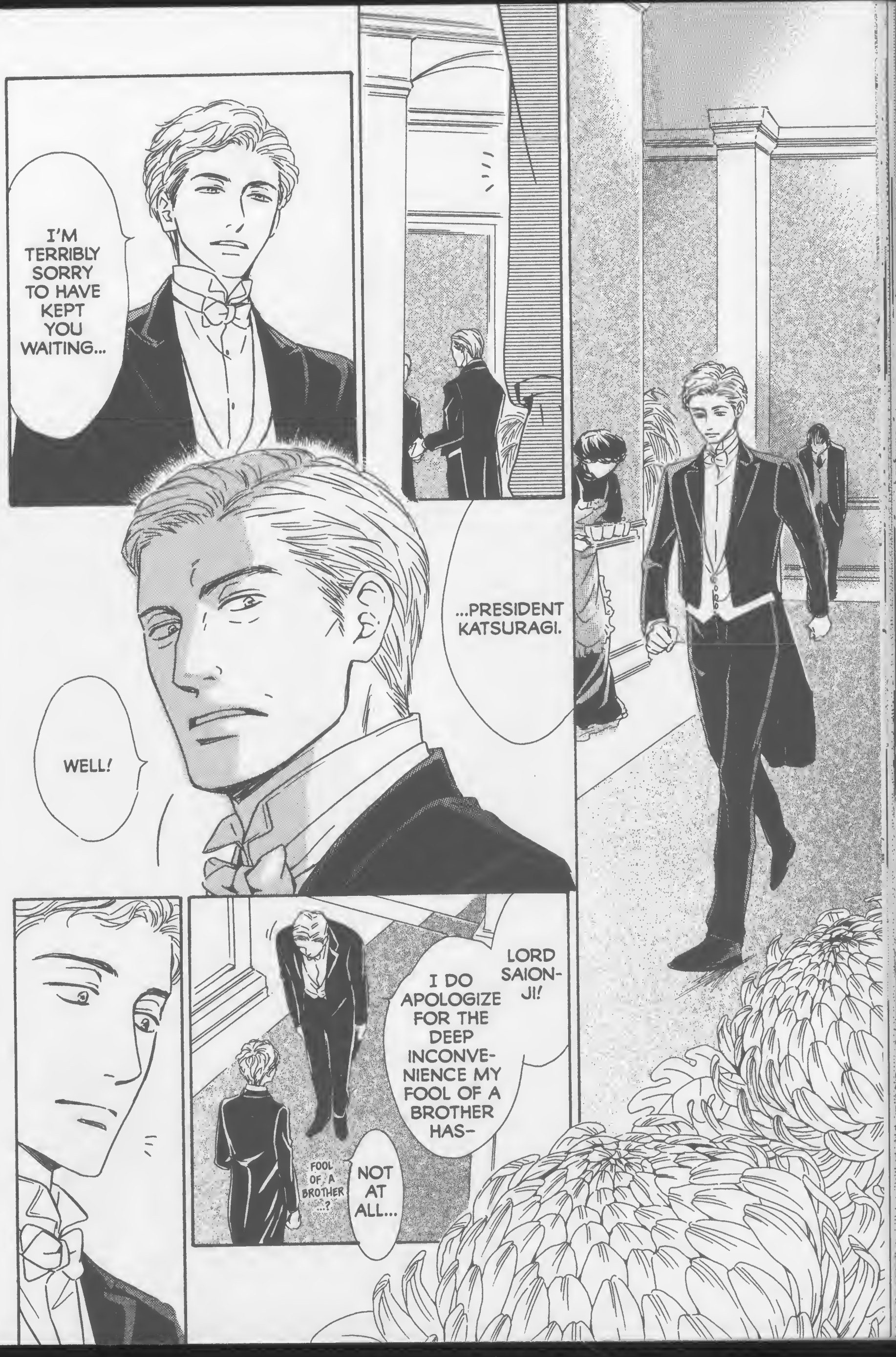

I HEAR YOU'RE SERVING THE ISHIZAKIS NOW?
YOU ARE CORRECT, YOUR EXCELLENCY.
I AM HONORED TO ATTEND THIS EVENING AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ISHIZAKI HOUSE.
RAP
RAP
KATSURAGI...
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?

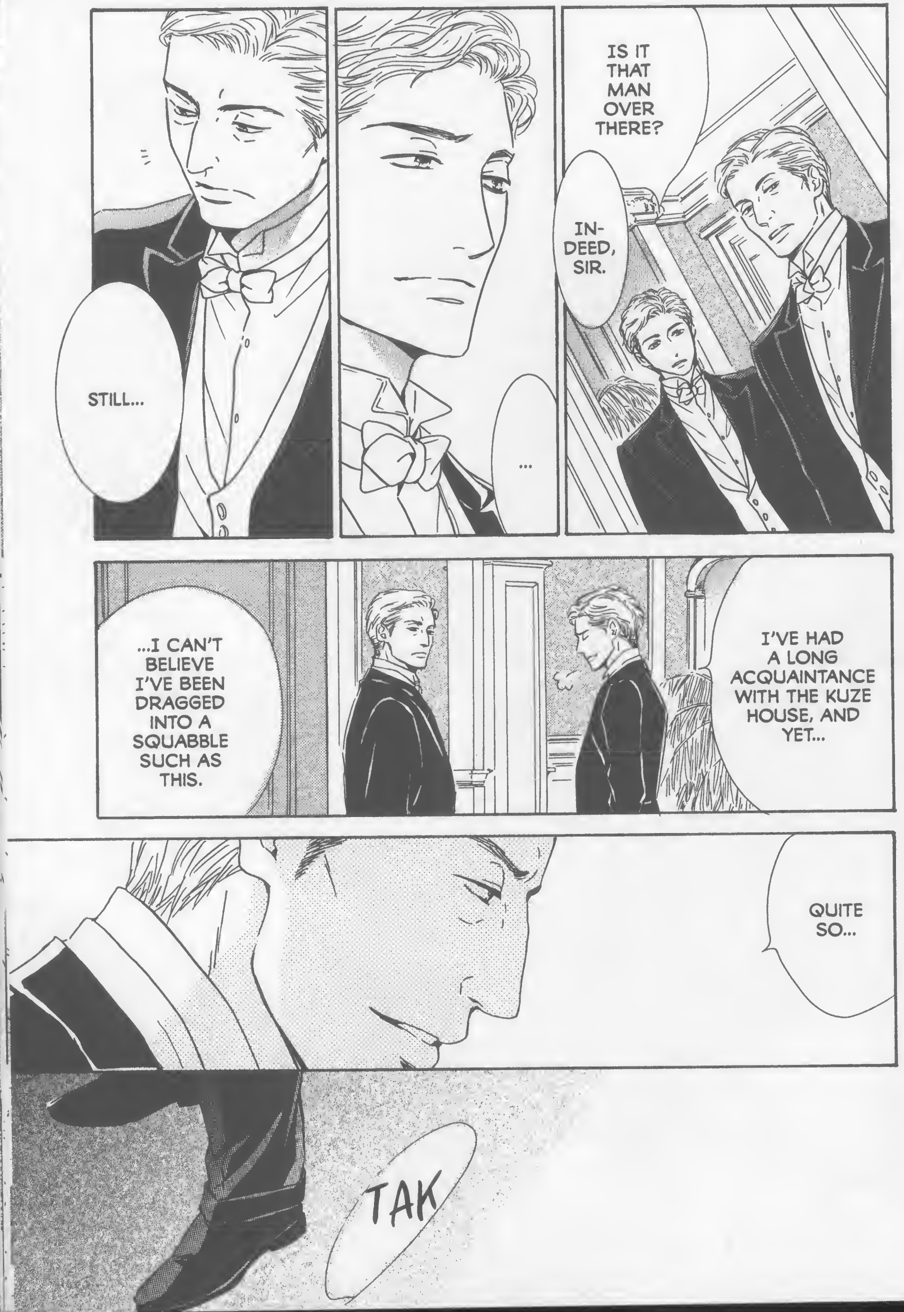

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN?
YOU AND I ABSOLUTELY DO NOT MEET IN PUBLIC.
PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS ARE TO PASS THROUGH KAYOKO.
FOR WHAT PURPOSE ARE YOU USING THE ISHIZAKI NAME?
YOU'RE TO BE THE MASTER OF THE KUZE HOUSE, AREN'T YOU?!
I'M BUSY. I HAVE NO INTENTION OF INVOLVING MYSELF IN THE DOMESTIC SQUABBLES OF A MERE VISCOUNTCY-
I KNEW THAT I WOULD BE ABLE TO MEET WITH YOU IF I PUT FORTH THE ISHIZAKI NAME.
YOU ACKNOWLEDGE THE INFLUENCE OF THEIR HOUSE.
!
ALTHOUGH YOU DISDAIN SUCH NOUVEAU RICHE MERCHANTS AS BENEATH YOU...
...HAVE THOSE OLD EYES OF YOURS FINALLY COME TO SEE THE TIMES AS THEY ARE?

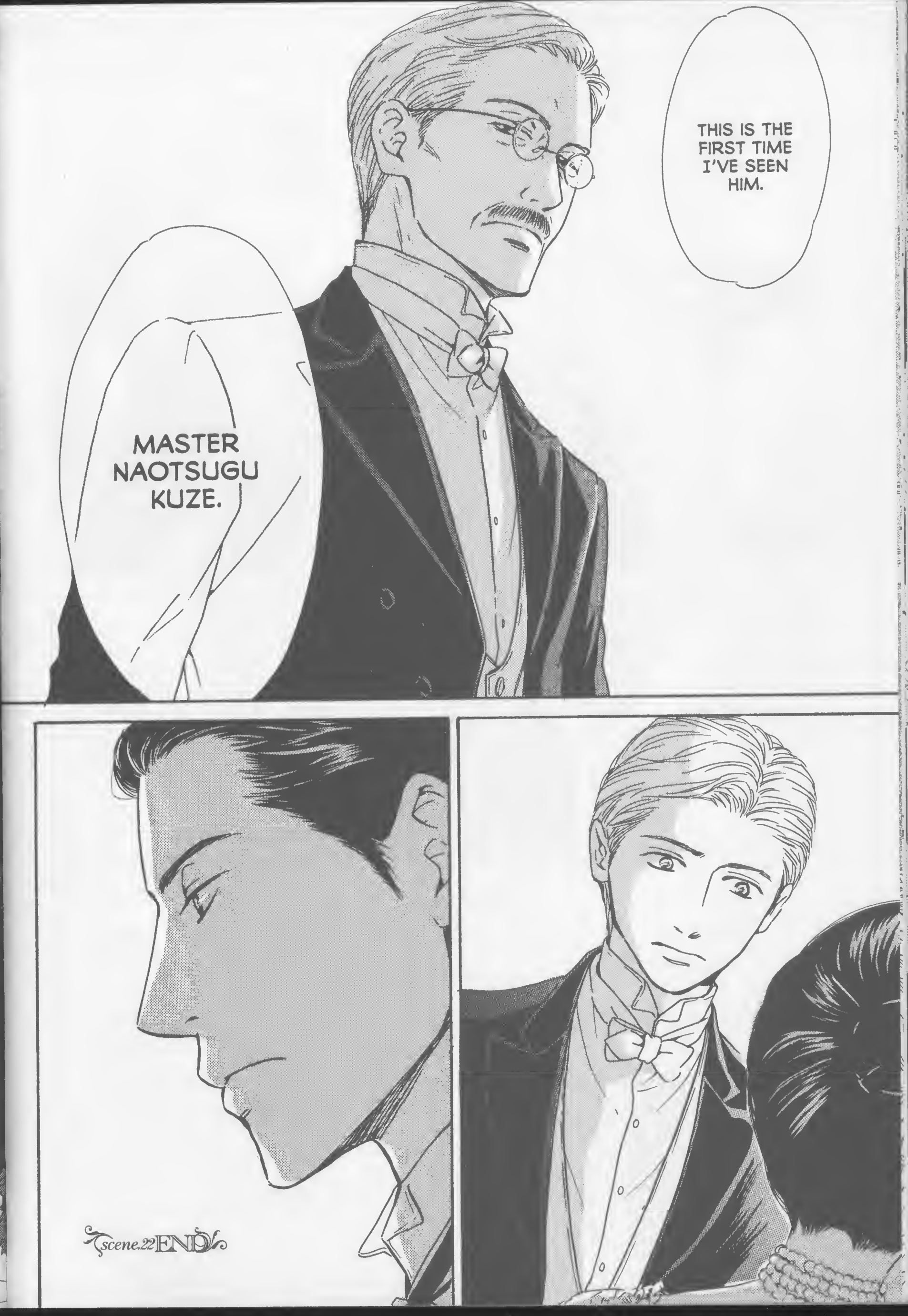

KATSURAGI!
BAM!
THERE ARE LIMITS TO YOUR INSOLENCE!
DO YOU WANT YOUR ASSETS STRIPPED FROM YOU LIKE AKIHITO KUZE?!
IF YOU WISH TO SUCCEED THE KUZE NAME, THEN YOU WILL-
I COULD CARE LESS...
...ABOUT SUCH A THING NOW.


TAK
YOUR EXCELLENCY.
YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY HAVE FORGOTTEN HOW HARD I WORKED ON YOUR BEHALF
WH...
TAK
TAK
YOUR EXCELLENCY MARQUISE MORIYAMA.
MONEY, WOMEN... ANYTHING YOU DESIRED, I MADE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THEM ALL.
TAK

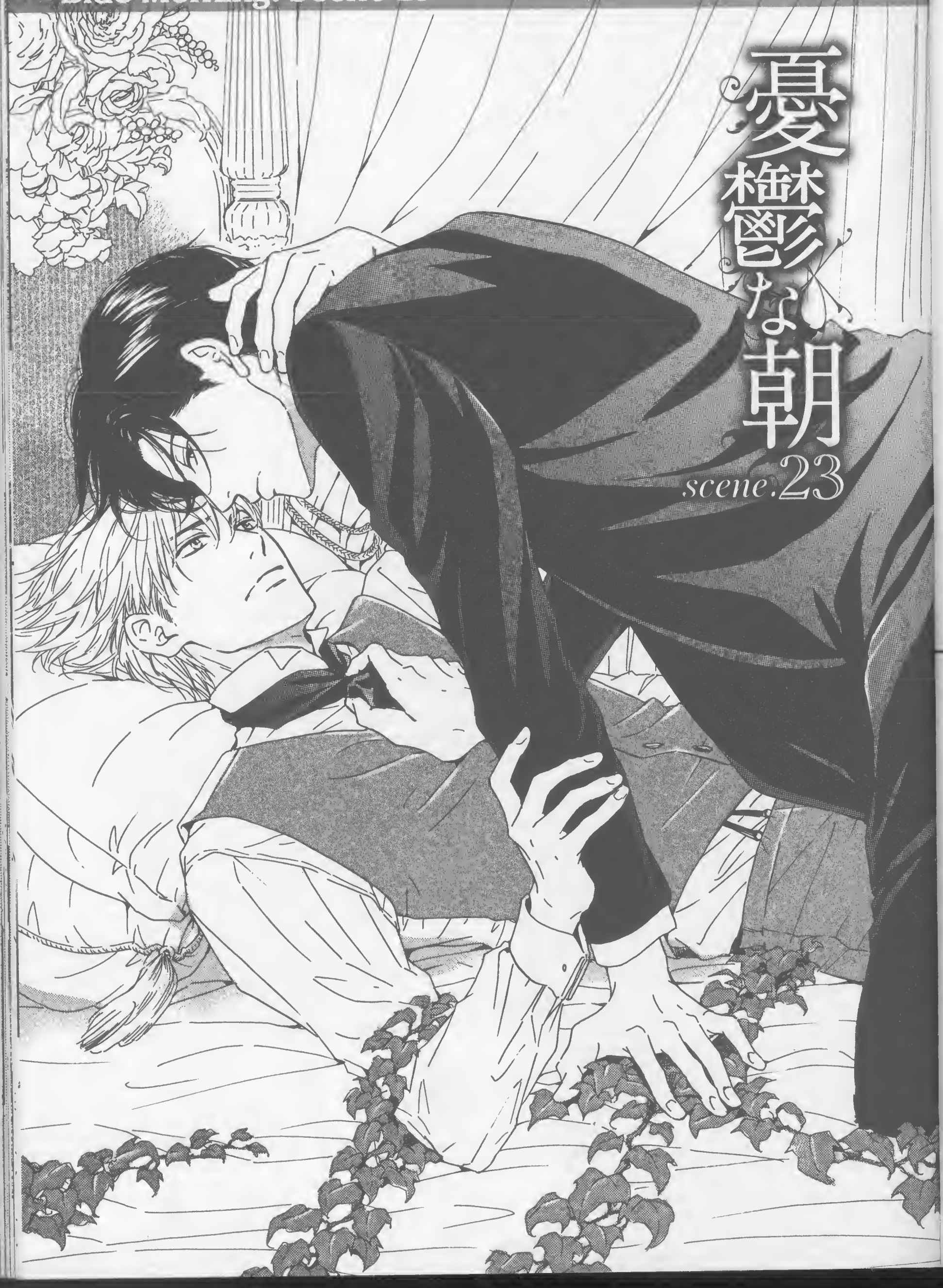

TODAY, I HAVE COME TO RECEIVE MY COMPENSATION.

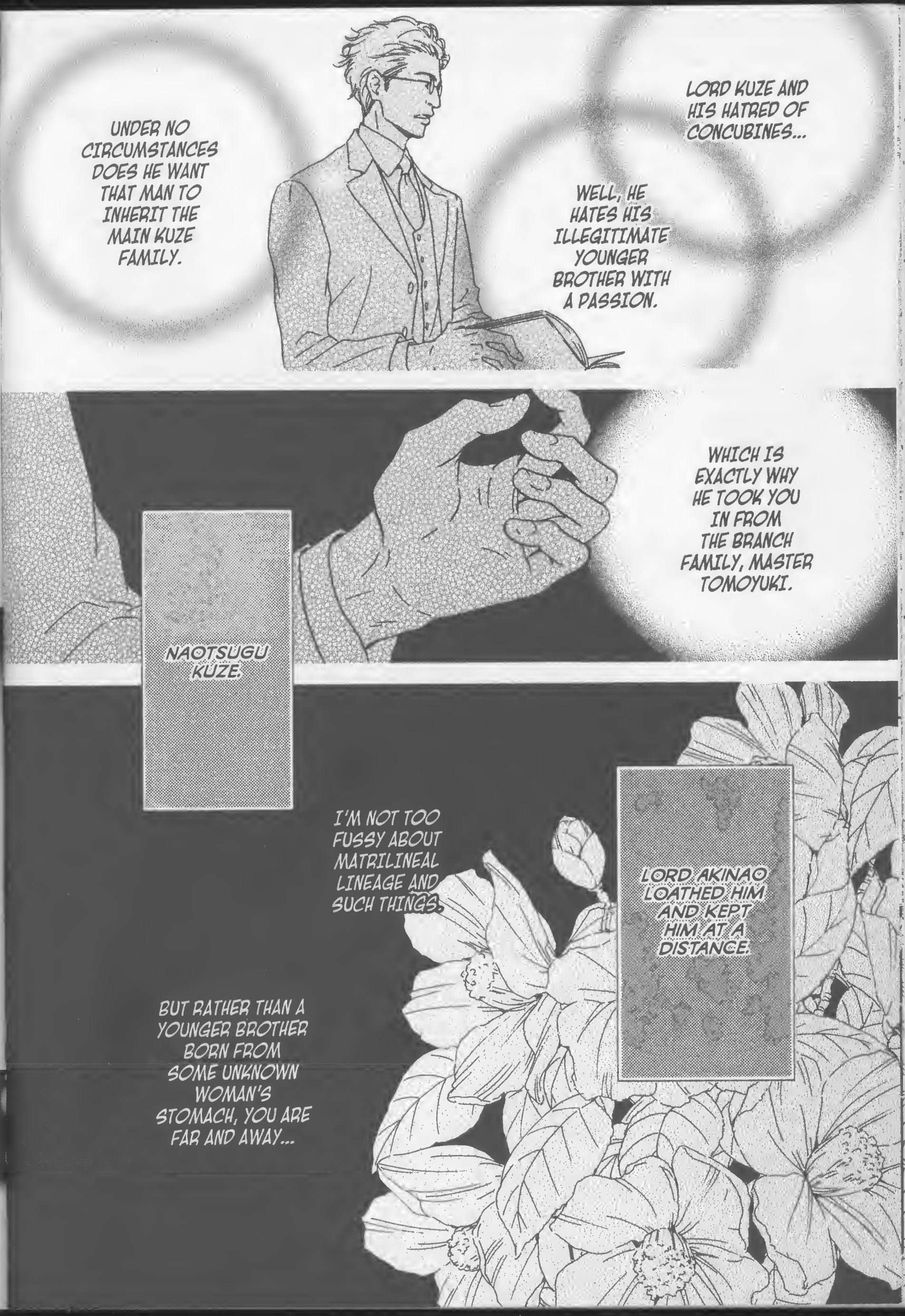

I'M TERRIBLY SORRY TO HAVE KEPT YOU WAITING...
...PRESIDENT KATSURAGI.
WELL!
LORD SAIONJI!
I DO APOLOGIZE FOR THE DEEP INCONVENIENCE MY FOOL OF A BROTHER HAS–
NOT AT ALL...
FOOL OF A BROTHER ...?

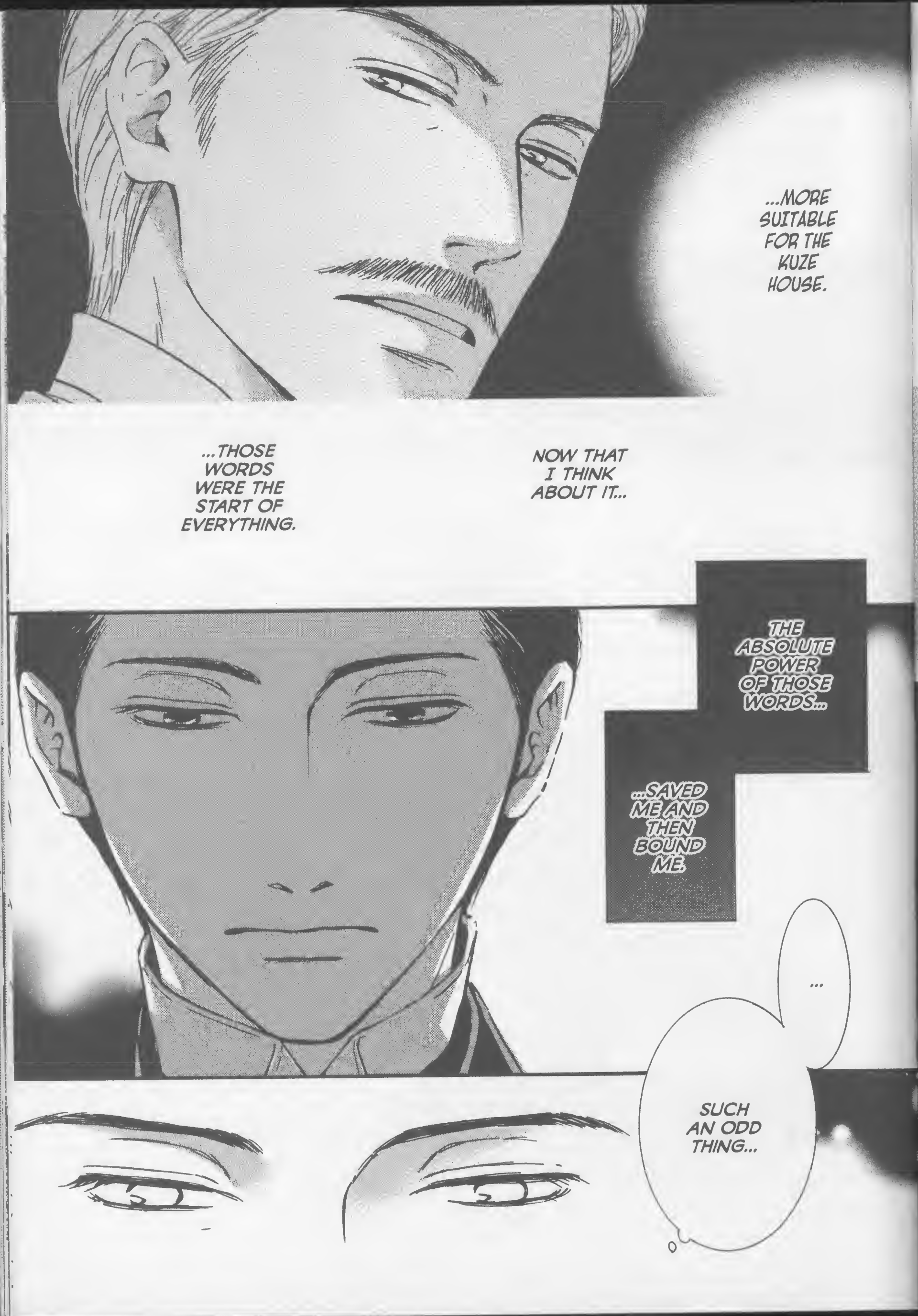

IS IT THAT MAN OVER THERE?
INDEED, SIR.
...
STILL...
I'VE HAD A LONG ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE KUZE HOUSE, AND YET...
...I CAN'T BELIEVE I'VE BEEN DRAGGED INTO A SQUABBLE SUCH AS THIS.
QUITE SO...
TAK

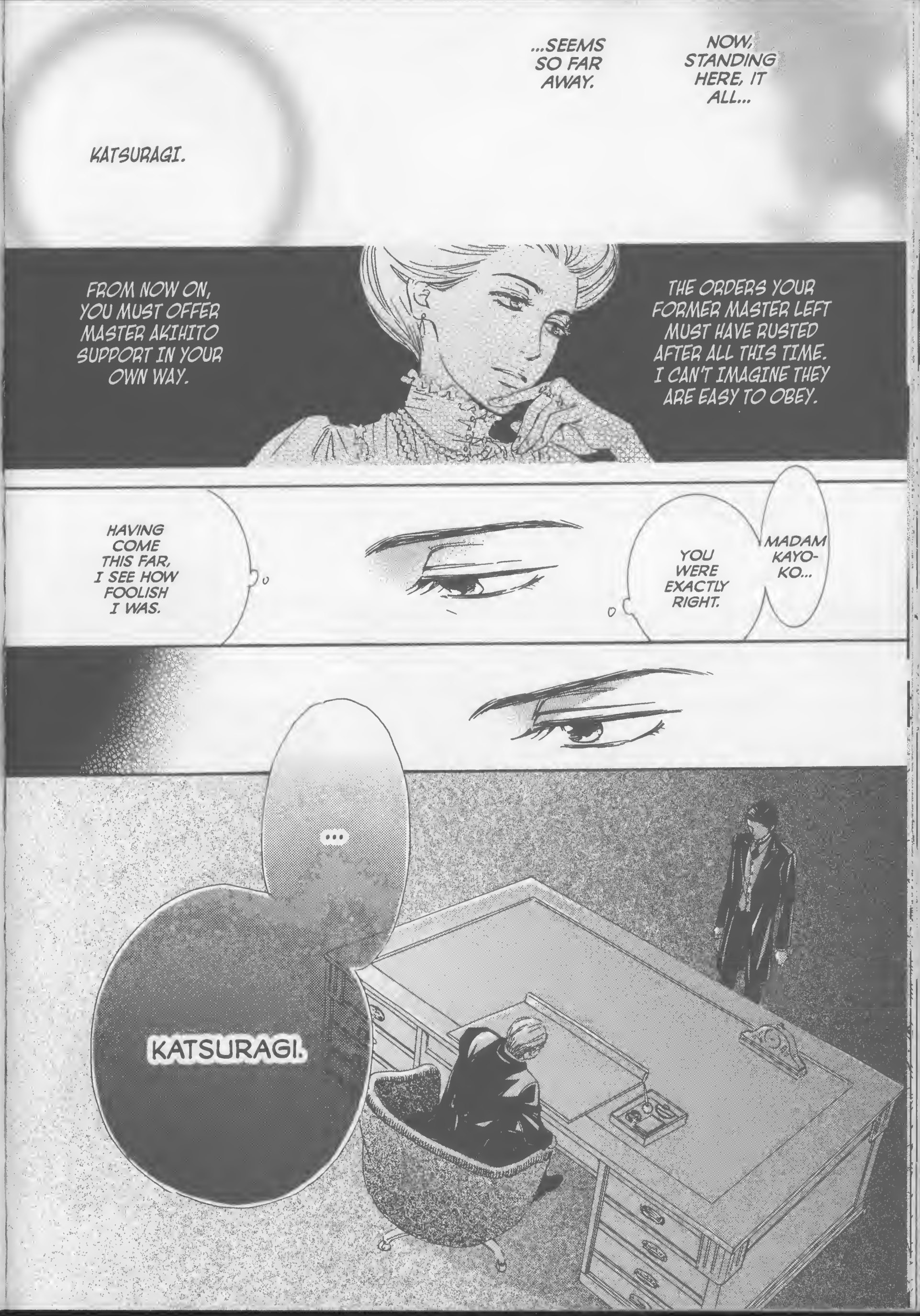

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN HIM.
MASTER NAOTSUGU KUZE.
scene.22 END

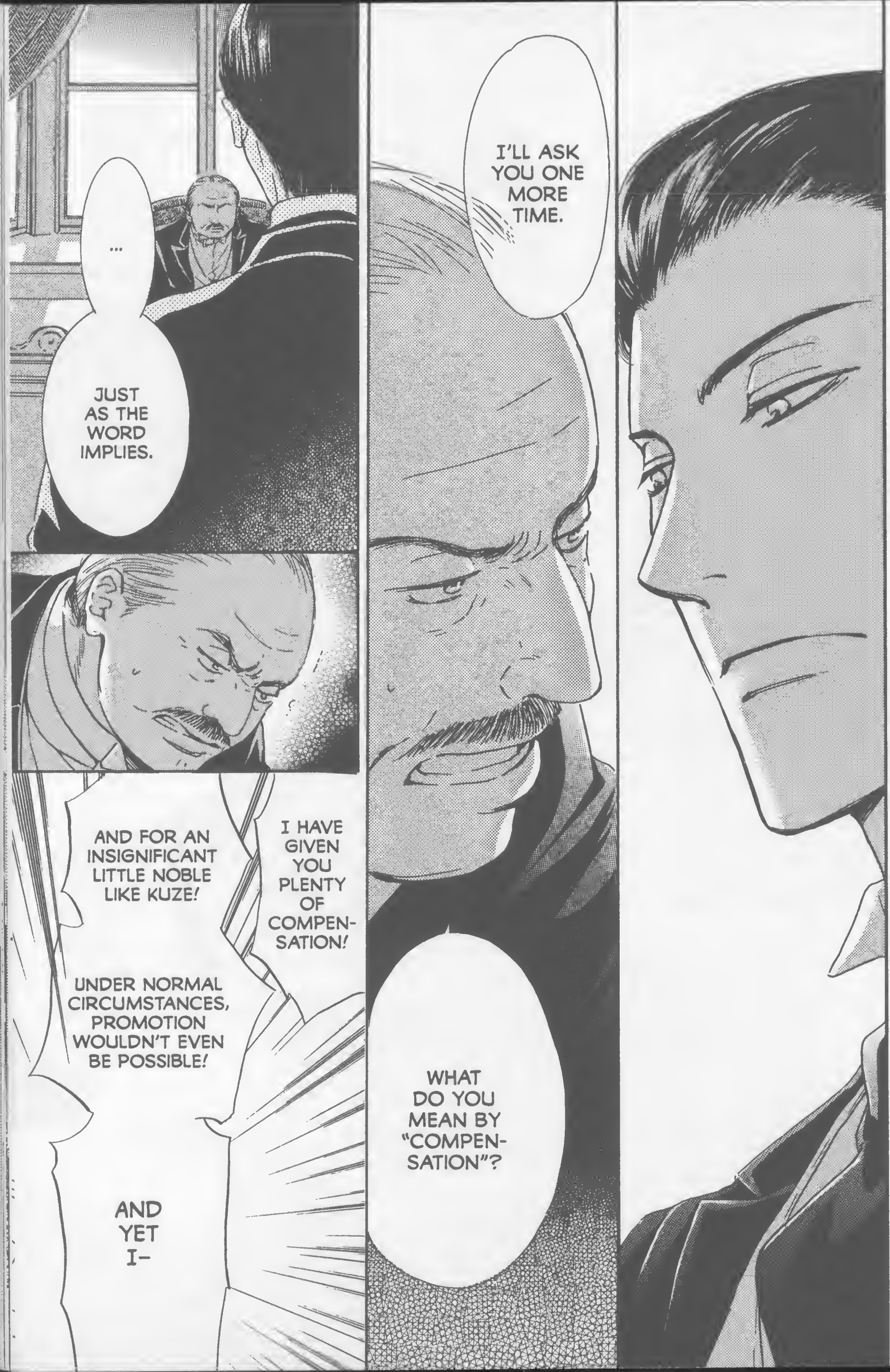
Blue Morning: Scene 23

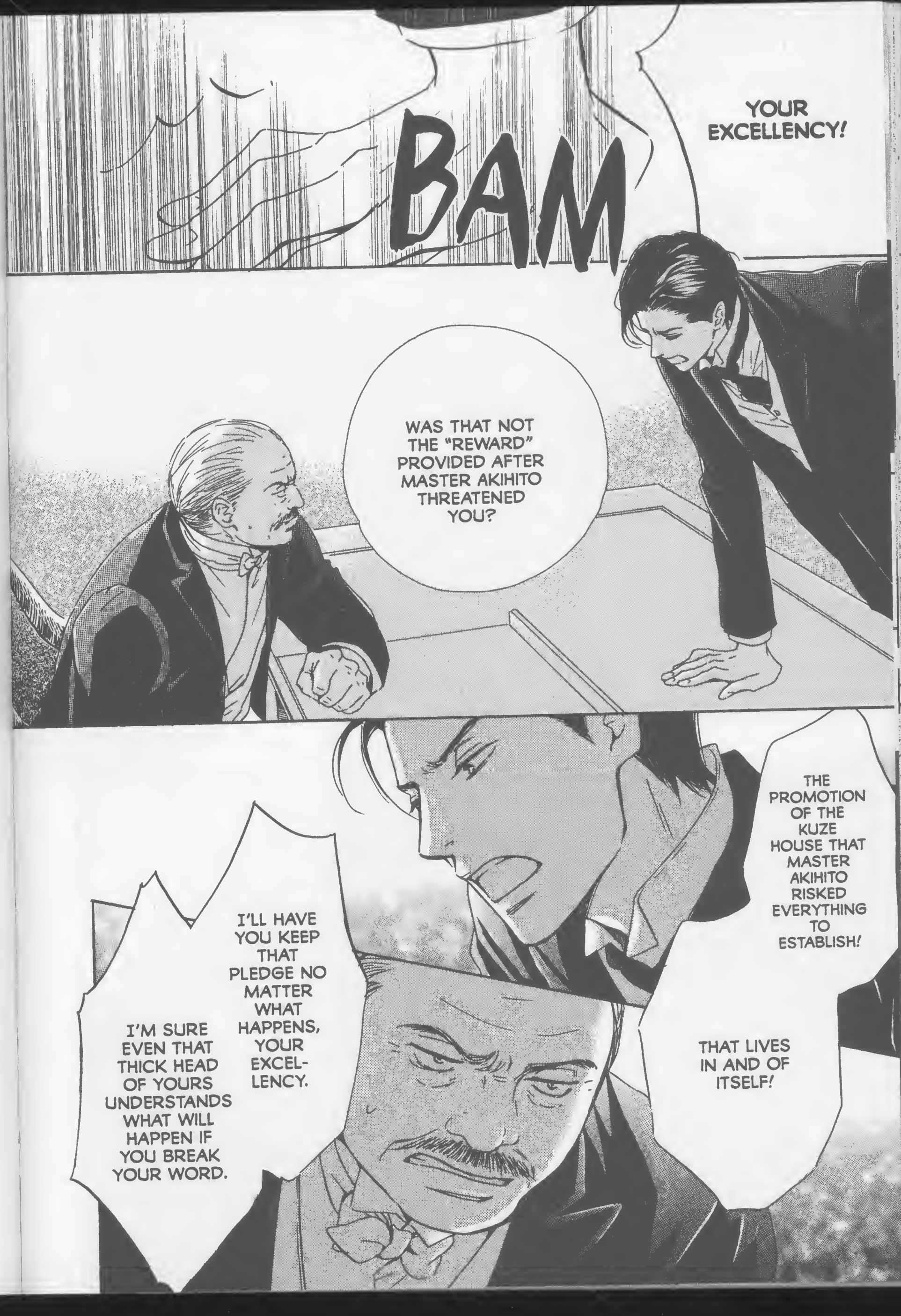

憂鬱な朝
scene.23

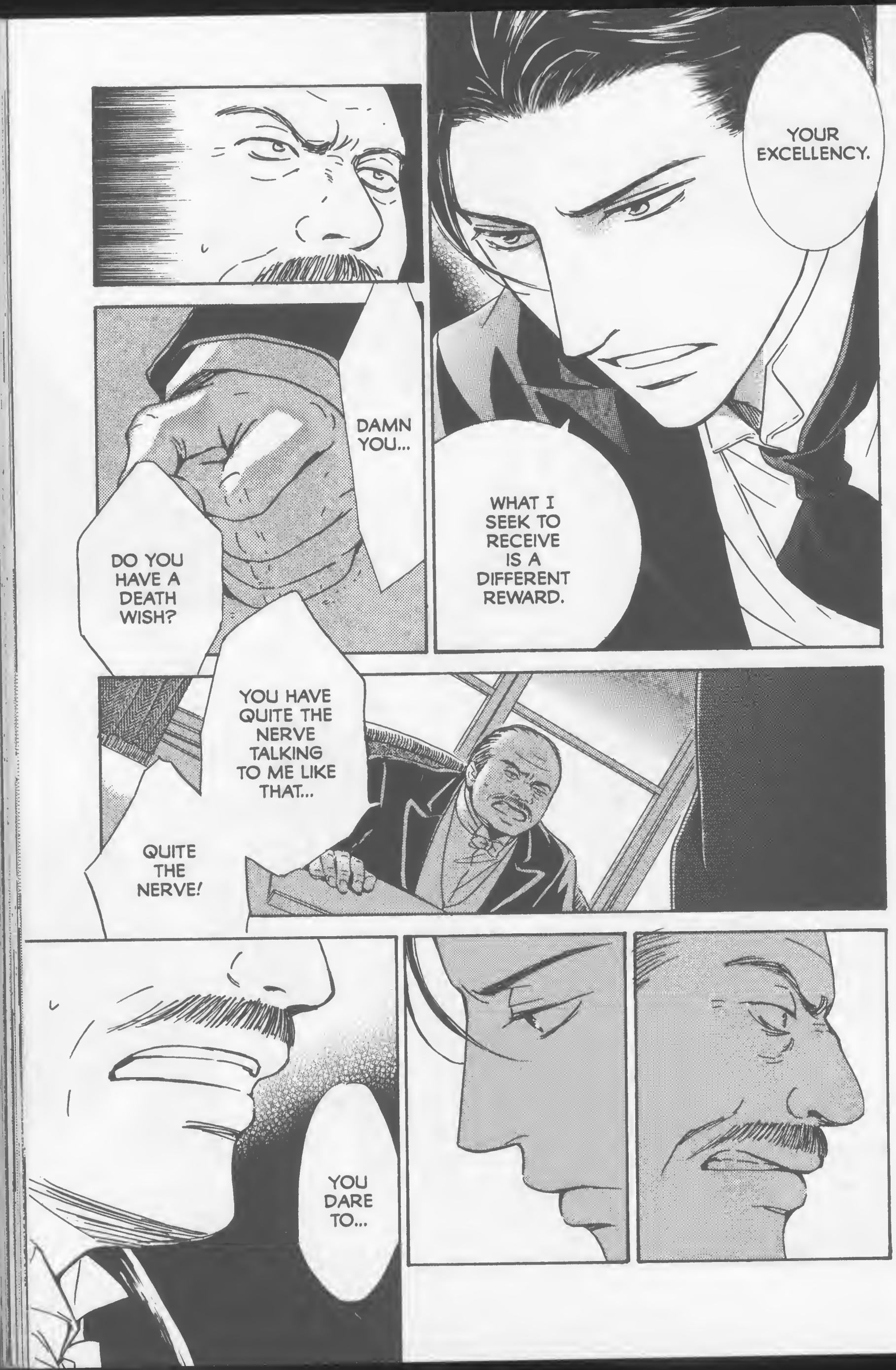

LORD KUZE AND HIS HATRED OF CONCUBINES...
WELL, HE HATES HIS ILLEGITIMATE YOUNGER BROTHER WITH A PASSION.
UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES DOES HE WANT THAT MAN TO INHERIT THE MAIN KUZE FAMILY.
WHICH IS EXACTLY WHY HE TOOK YOU IN FROM THE BRANCH FAMILY, MASTER TOMOYUKI.
NAOTSUGU KUZE.
LORD AKINAO LOATHED HIM AND KEPT HIM AT A DISTANCE.
I'M NOT TOO FUSSY ABOUT MATRILINEAL LINEAGE AND SUCH THINGS.
BUT RATHER THAN A YOUNGER BROTHER BORN FROM SOME UNKNOWN WOMAN'S STOMACH, YOU ARE FAR AND AWAY...

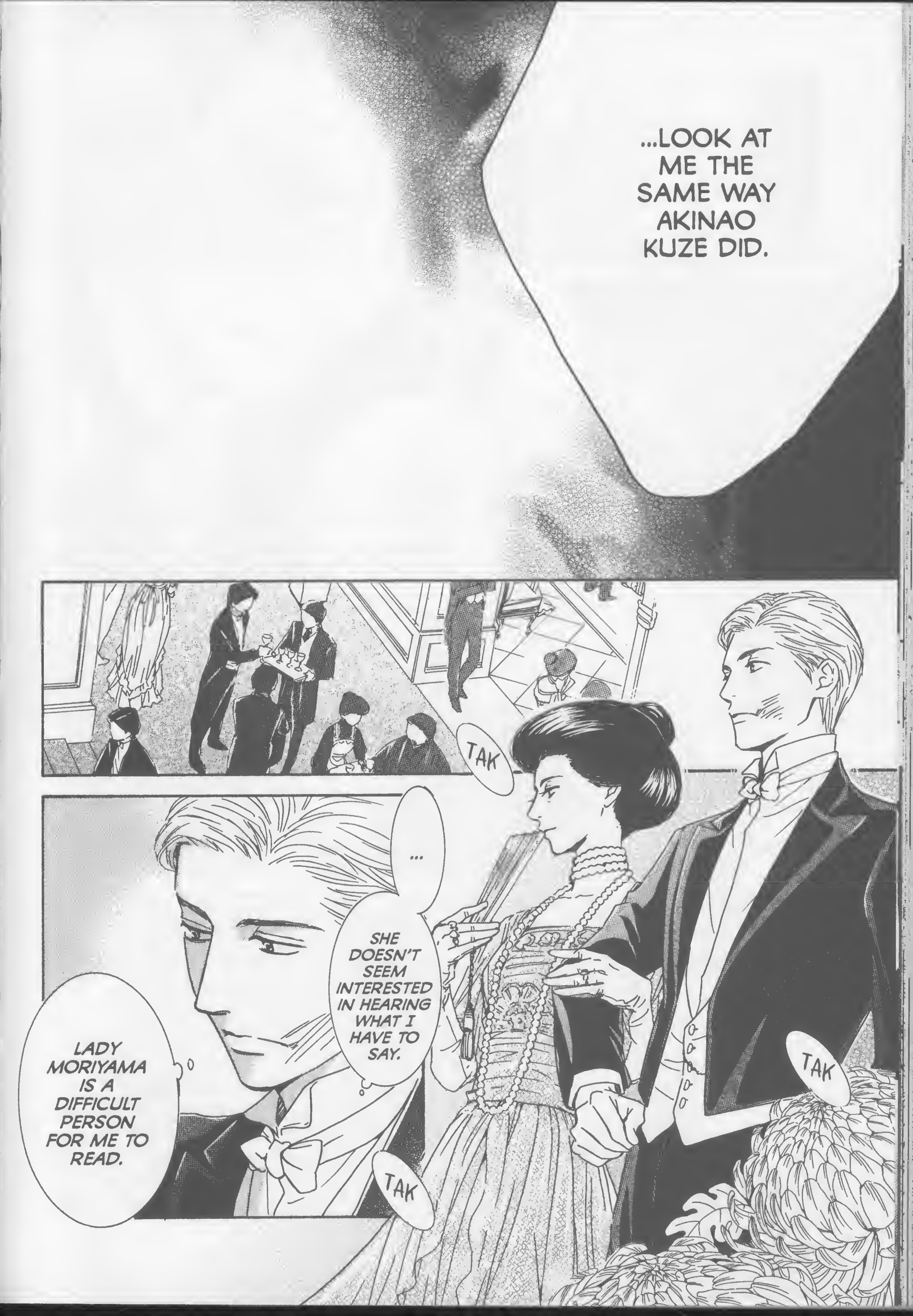

...MORE SUITABLE FOR THE KUZE HOUSE.
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT...
...THOSE WORDS WERE THE START OF EVERYTHING.
THE ABSOLUTE POWER OF THOSE WORDS...
...SAVED ME AND THEN BOUND ME.
...
SUCH AN ODD THING...

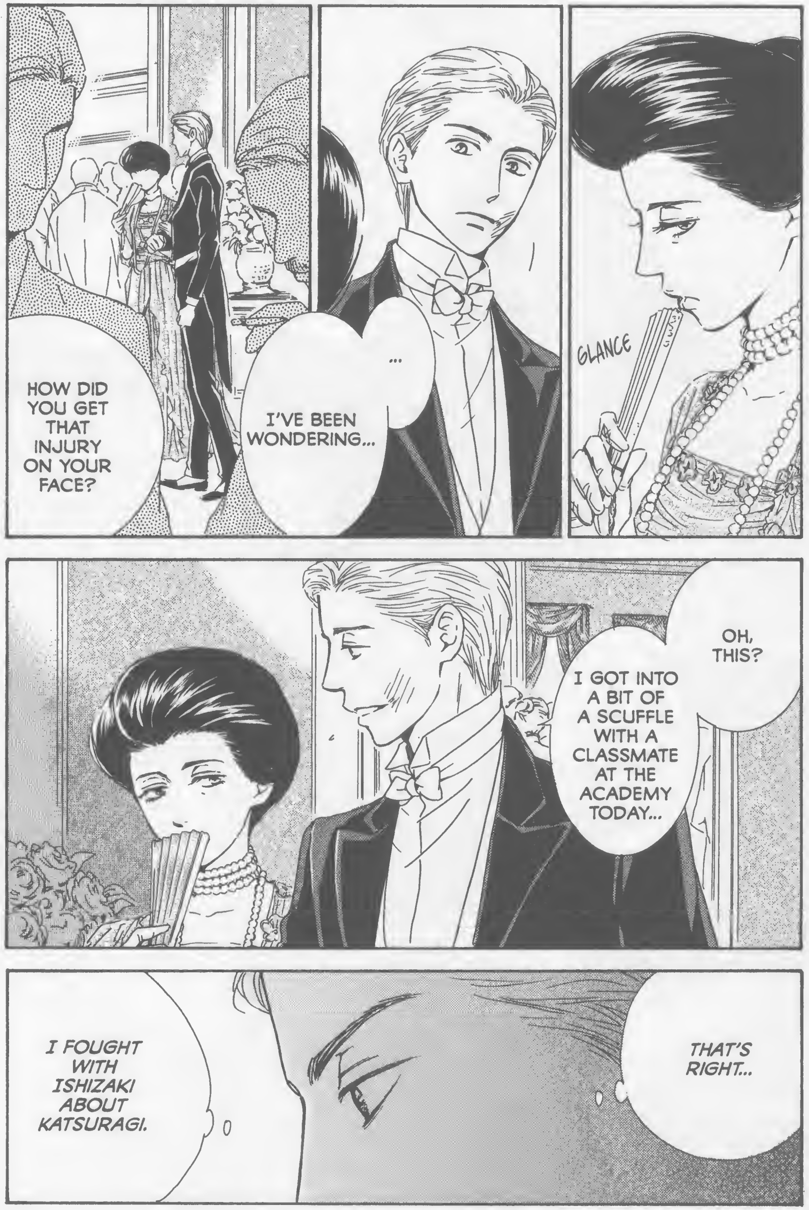

NOW, STANDING HERE, IT ALL...
...SEEMS SO FAR AWAY.
KATSURAGI.
THE ORDERS YOUR FORMER MASTER LEFT MUST HAVE RUSTED AFTER ALL THIS TIME. I CAN'T IMAGINE THEY ARE EASY TO OBEY.
FROM NOW ON, YOU MUST OFFER MASTER AKIHITO SUPPORT IN YOUR OWN WAY.
MADAM KAYOKO...
YOU WERE EXACTLY RIGHT.
HAVING COME THIS FAR, I SEE HOW FOOLISH I WAS.
...
KATSURAGI.

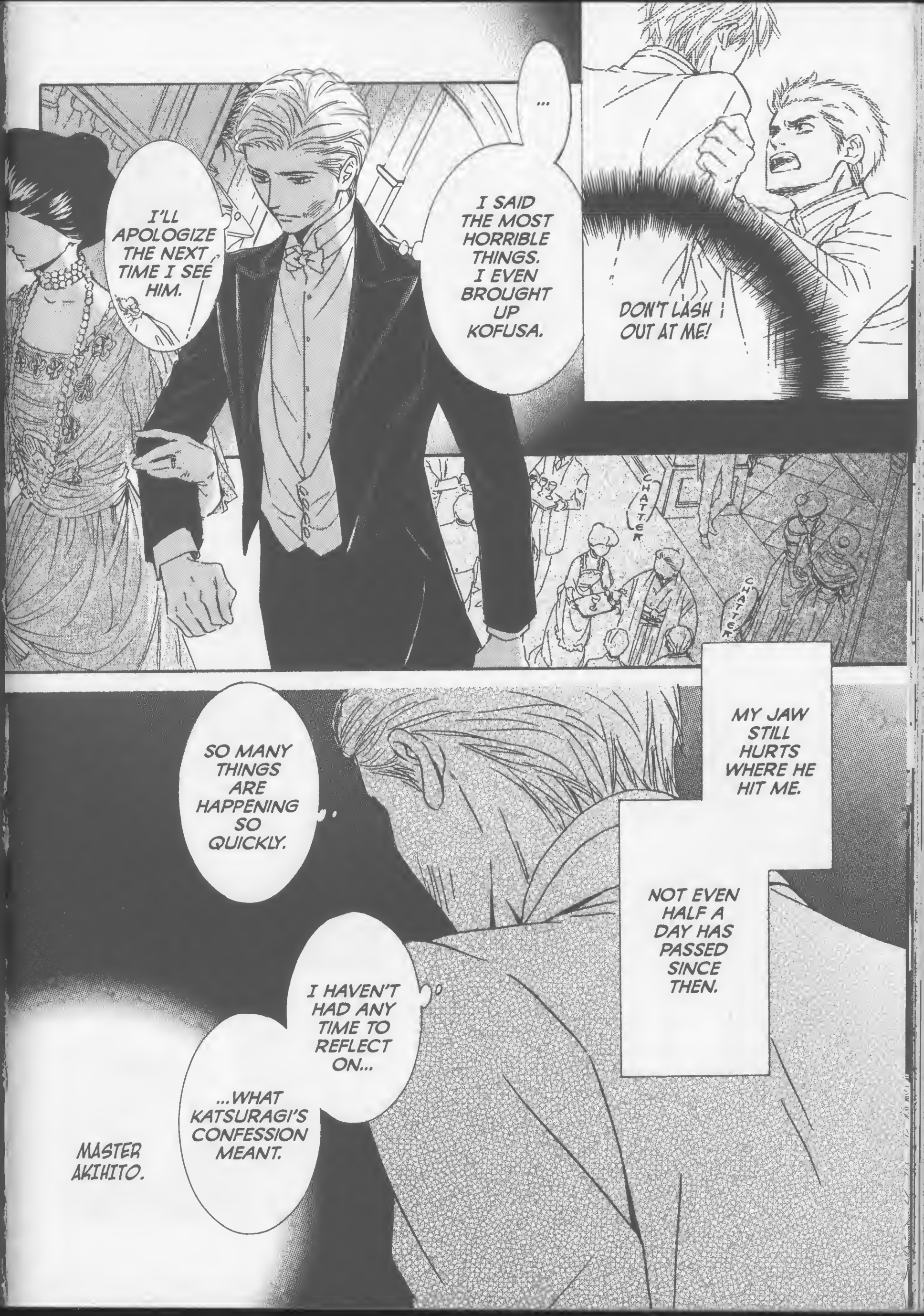

I'LL ASK YOU ONE MORE TIME.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "COMPENSATION"?
...
JUST AS THE WORD IMPLIES.
I HAVE GIVEN YOU PLENTY OF COMPENSATION!
AND FOR AN INSIGNIFICANT LITTLE NOBLE LIKE KUZE!
UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, PROMOTION WOULDN'T EVEN BE POSSIBLE!
AND YET I–

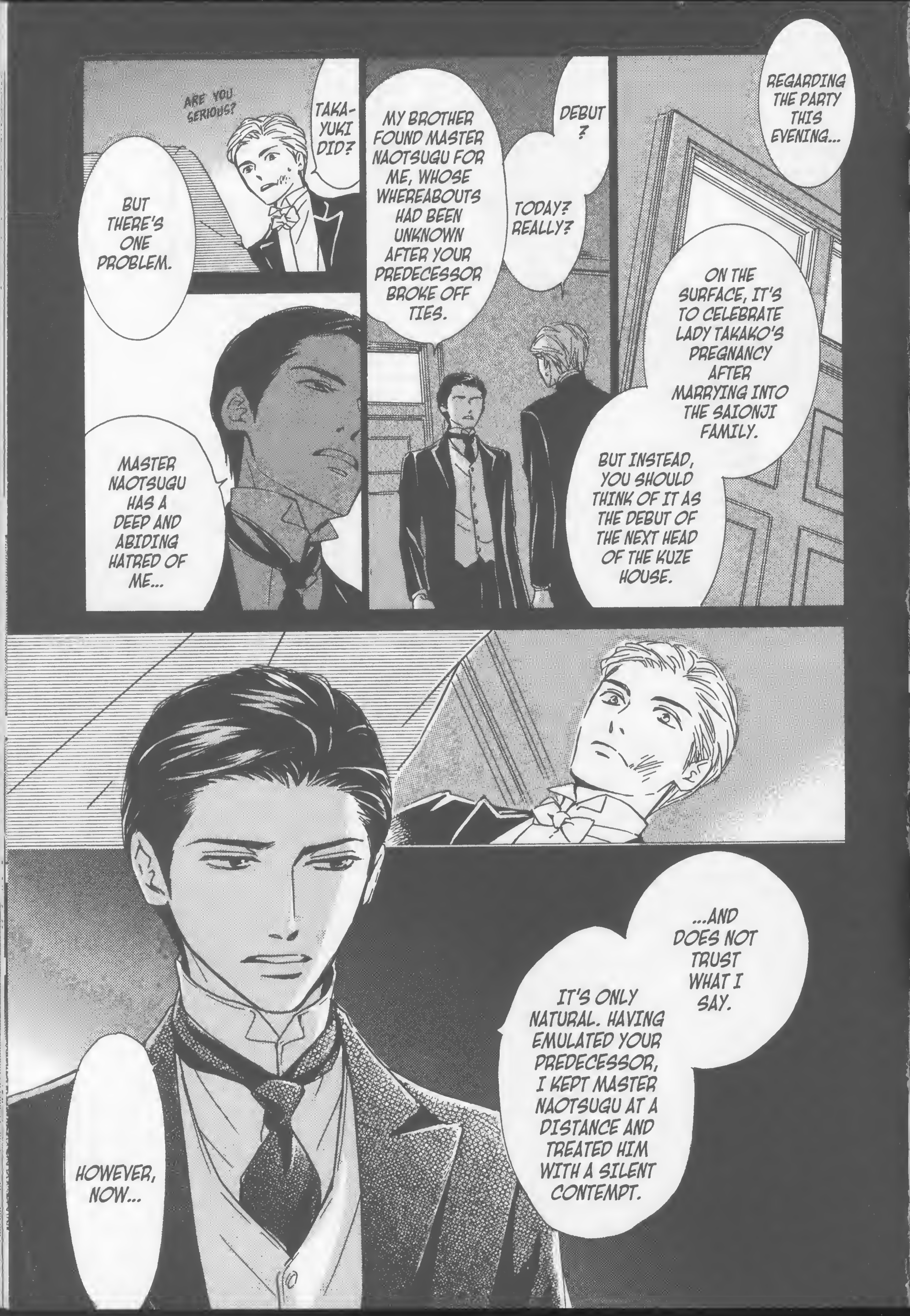

YOUR EXCELLENCY!
BAM
WAS THAT NOT THE "REWARD" PROVIDED AFTER MASTER AKIHITO THREATENED YOU?
THE PROMOTION OF THE KUZE HOUSE THAT MASTER AKIHITO RISKED EVERYTHING TO ESTABLISH!
THAT LIVES IN AND OF ITSELF!
I'LL HAVE YOU KEEP THAT PLEDGE NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, YOUR EXCELLENCY.
I'M SURE EVEN THAT THICK HEAD OF YOURS UNDERSTANDS WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU BREAK YOUR WORD.

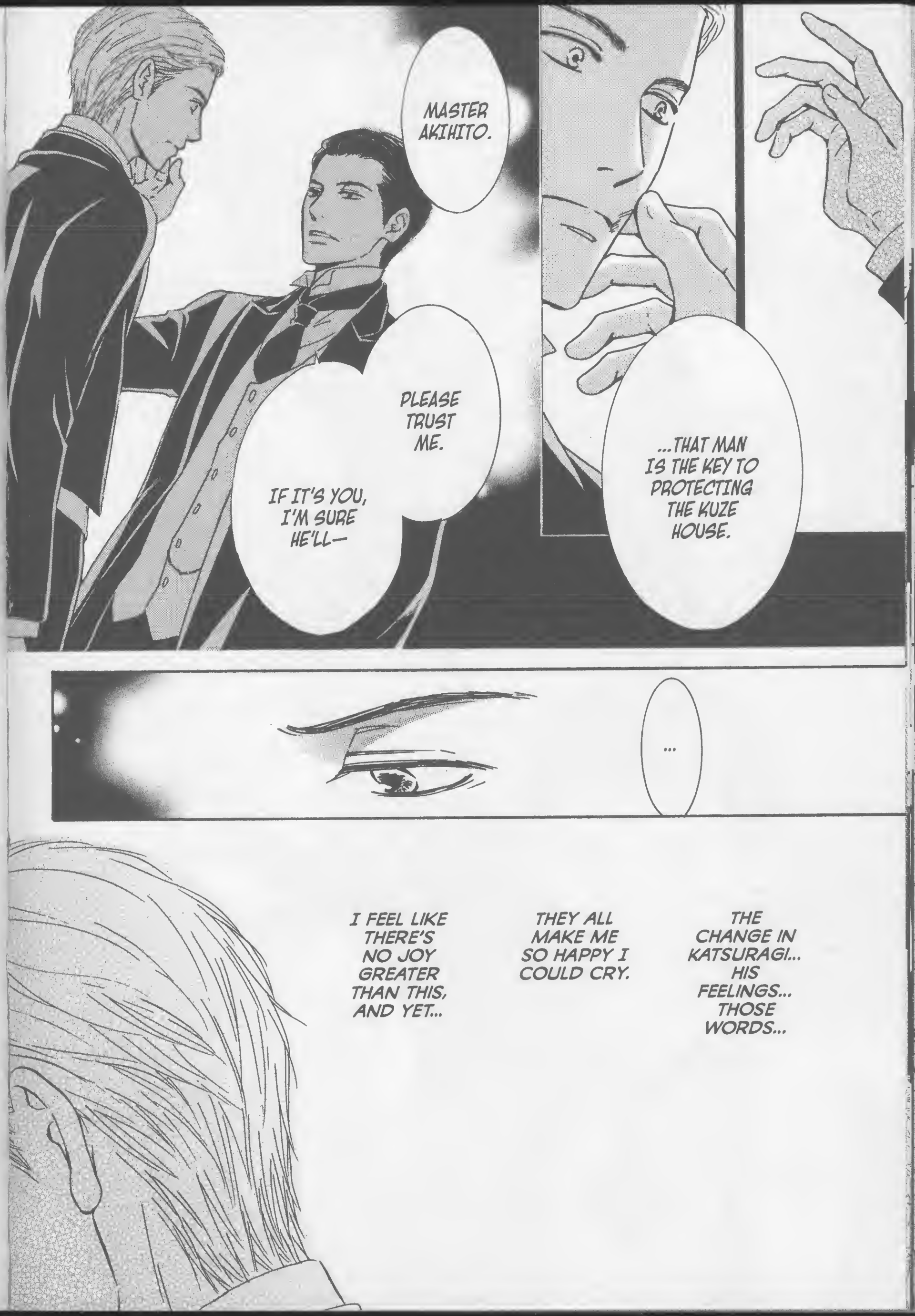

YOUR EXCELLENCY.
WHAT I SEEK TO RECEIVE IS A DIFFERENT REWARD.
DAMN YOU...
DO YOU HAVE A DEATH WISH?
YOU HAVE QUITE THE NERVE TALKING TO ME LIKE THAT...
QUITE THE NERVE!
YOU DARE TO...

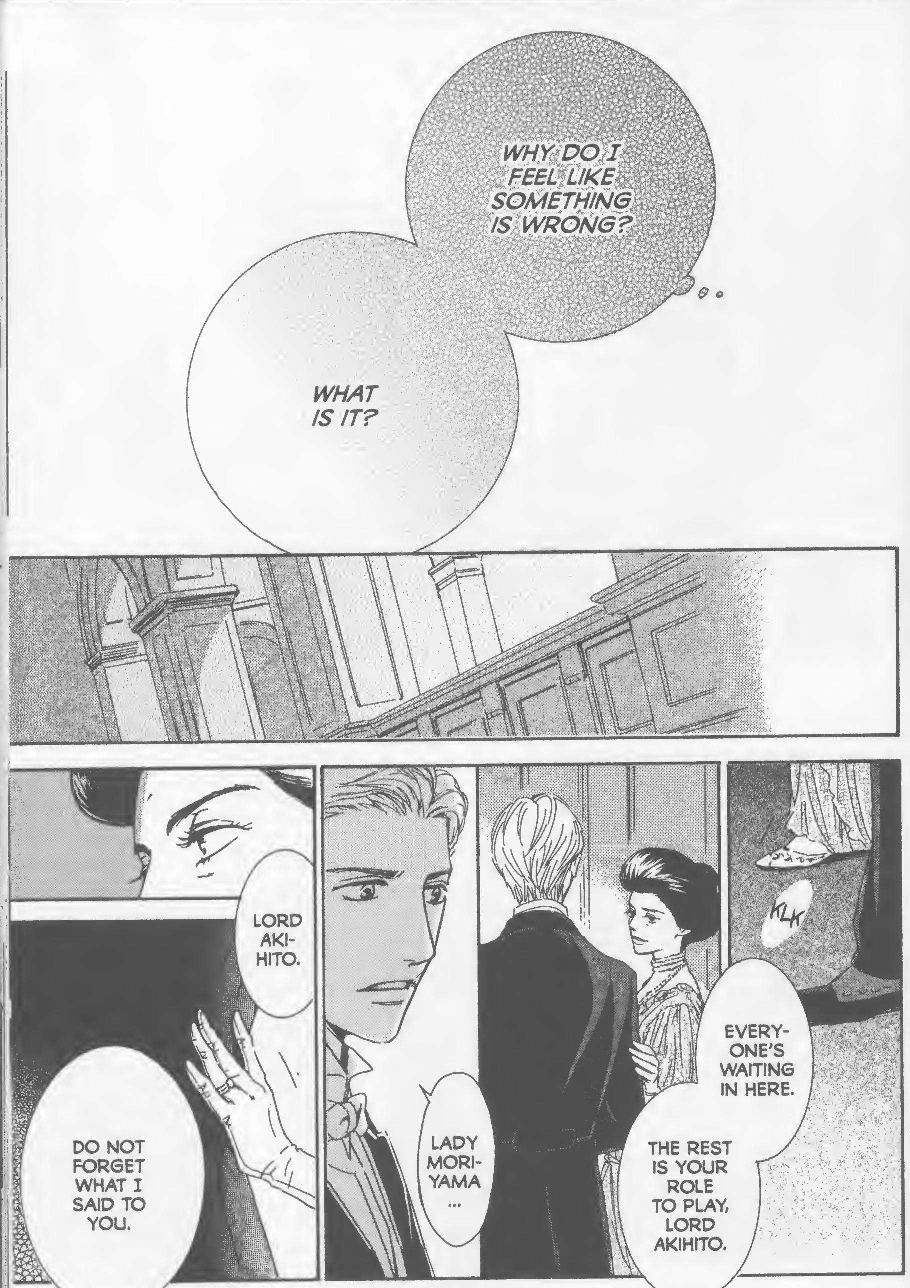

...LOOK AT ME THE SAME WAY AKINAO KUZE DID.
TAK
...
SHE DOESN'T SEEM INTERESTED IN HEARING WHAT I HAVE TO SAY.
LADY MORIYAMA IS A DIFFICULT PERSON FOR ME TO READ.
TAK
TAK

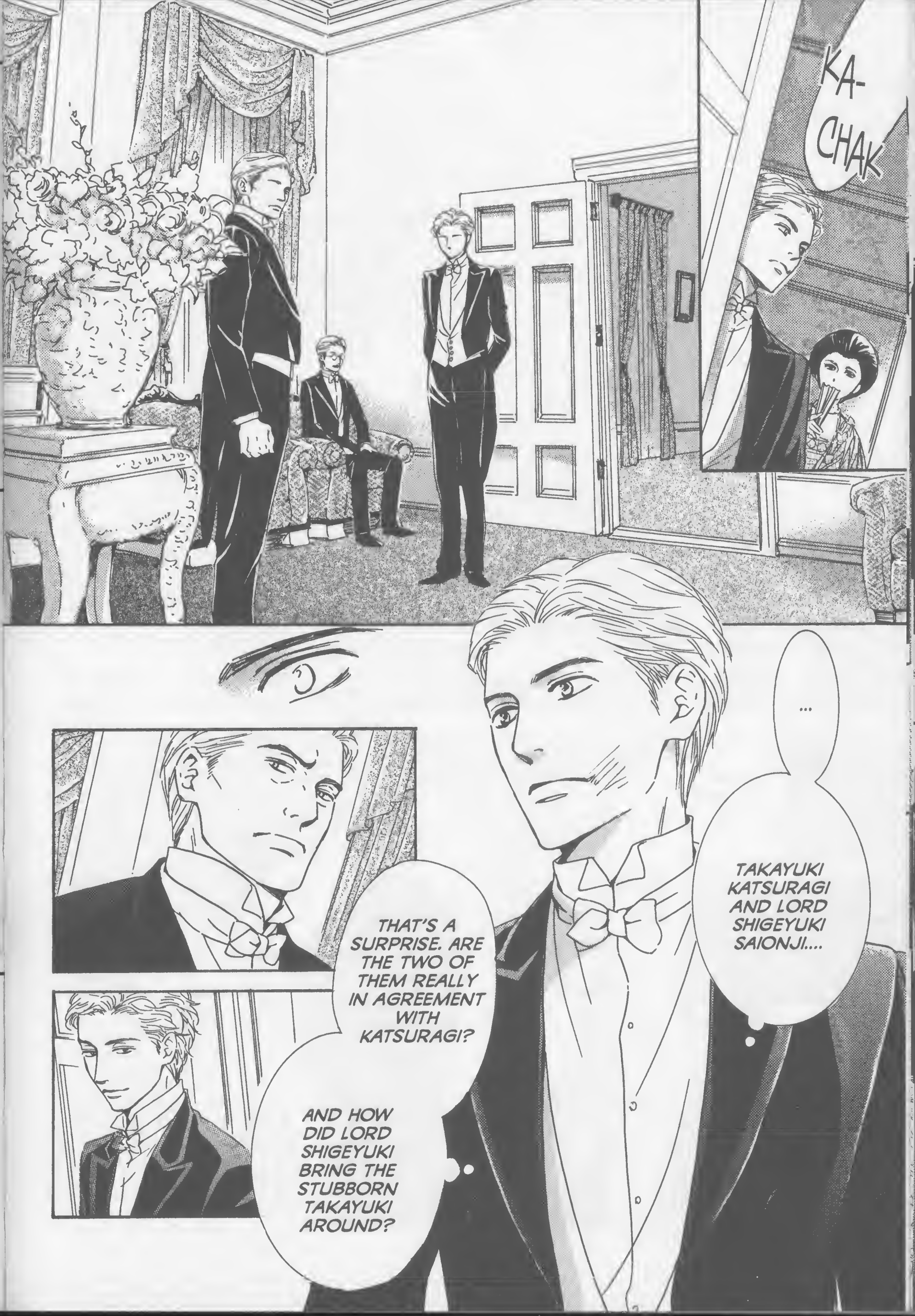

GLANCE
...
I'VE BEEN WONDERING...
HOW DID YOU GET THAT INJURY ON YOUR FACE?
OH, THIS?
I GOT INTO A BIT OF A SCUFFLE WITH A CLASSMATE AT THE ACADEMY TODAY...
THAT'S RIGHT...
I FOUGHT WITH ISHIZAKI ABOUT KATSURAGI.

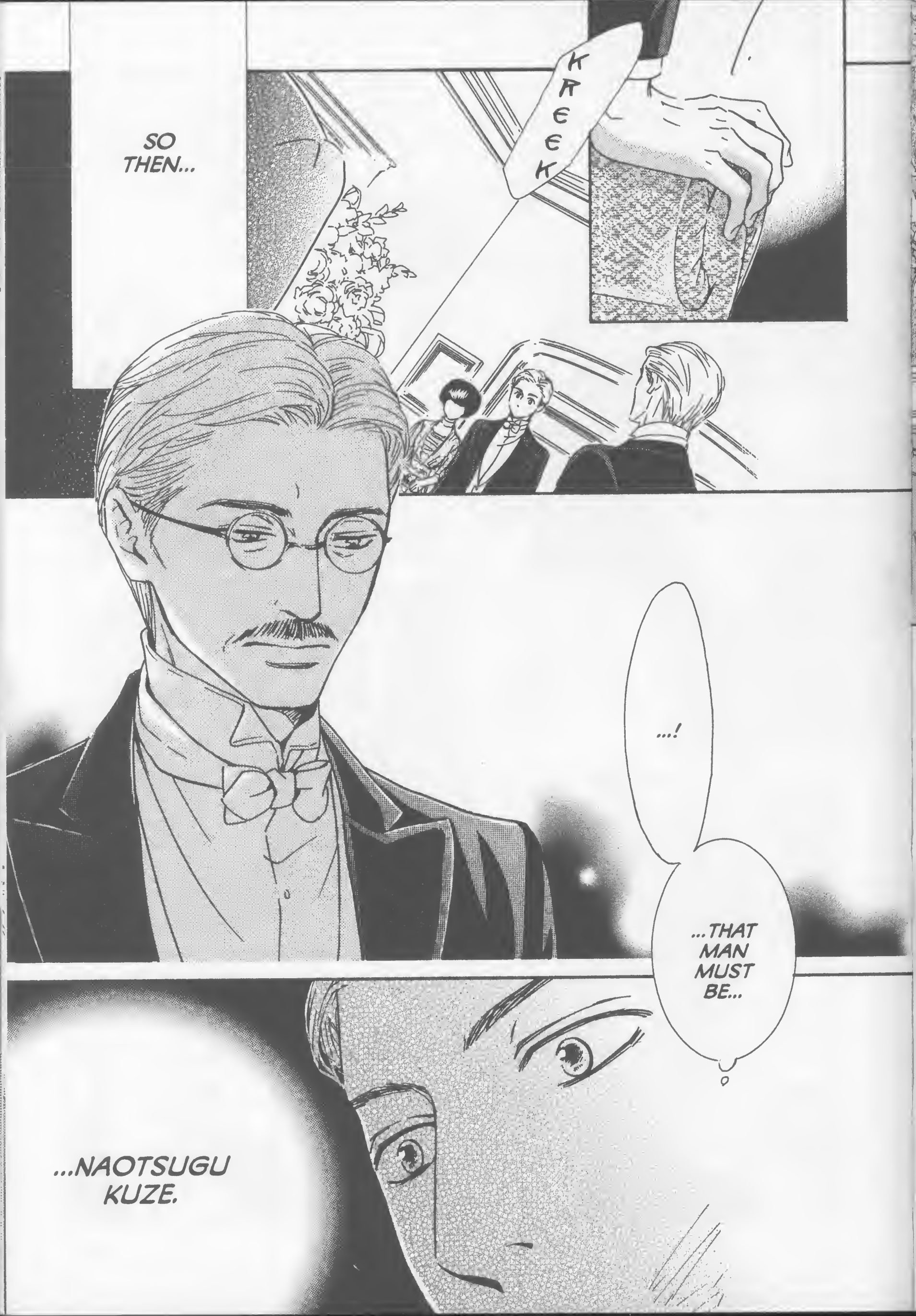

DON'T LASH OUT AT ME!
...
I SAID THE MOST HORRIBLE THINGS. I EVEN BROUGHT UP KOFUSA.
I'LL APOLOGIZE THE NEXT TIME I SEE HIM.
CHATTER
CHATTER
MY JAW STILL HURTS WHERE HE HIT ME.
NOT EVEN HALF A DAY HAS PASSED SINCE THEN.
SO MANY THINGS ARE HAPPENING SO QUICKLY.
I HAVEN'T HAD ANY TIME TO REFLECT ON...
...WHAT KATSURAGI'S CONFESSION MEANT.
MASTER AKIHITO.

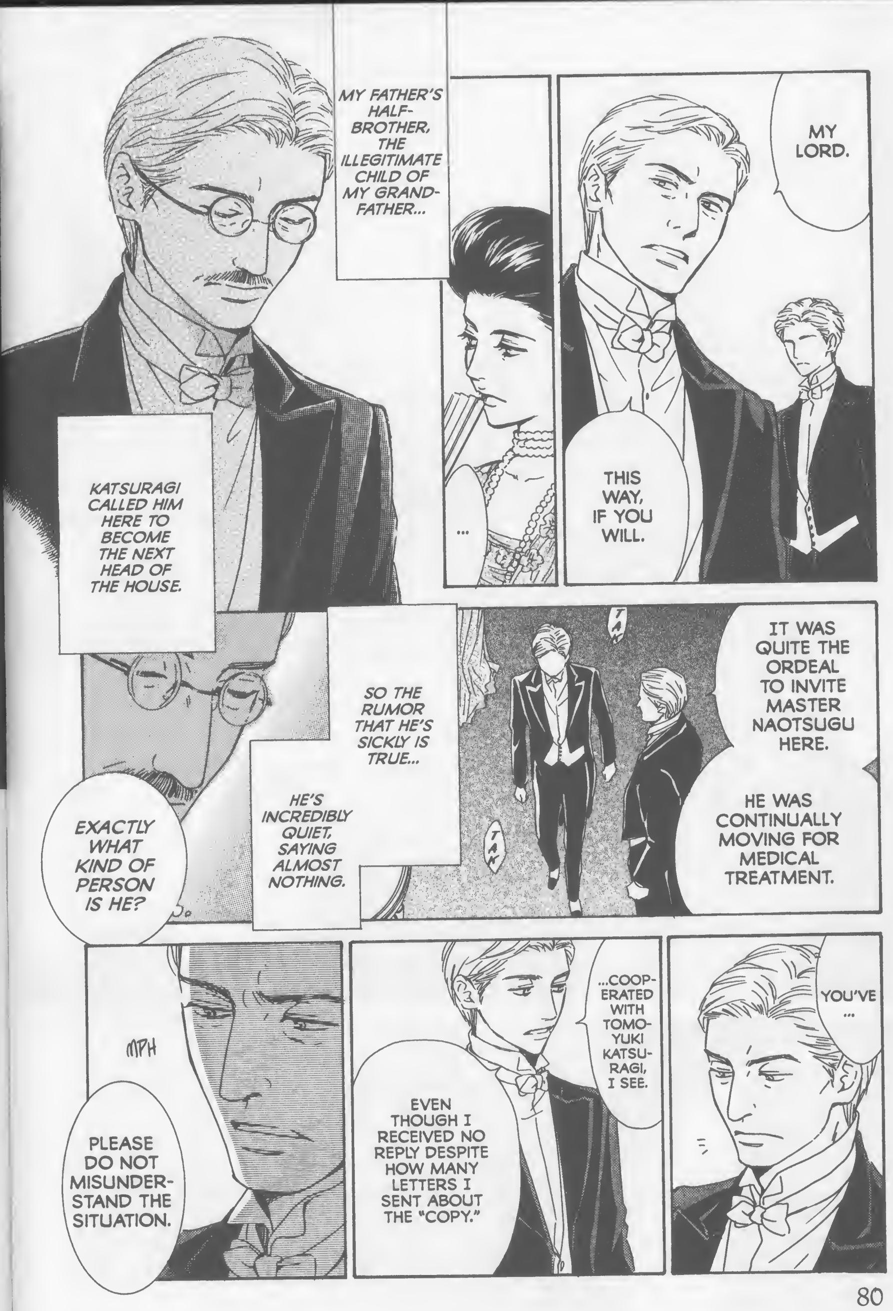

REGARDING THE PARTY THIS EVENING...
ON THE SURFACE, IT'S TO CELEBRATE LADY TAKAKO'S PREGNANCY AFTER MARRYING INTO THE SAIONJI FAMILY.
BUT INSTEAD, YOU SHOULD THINK OF IT AS THE DEBUT OF THE NEXT HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
DEBUT?
TODAY? REALLY?
MY BROTHER FOUND MASTER NAOTSUGU FOR ME, WHOSE WHEREABOUTS HAD BEEN UNKNOWN AFTER YOUR PREDECESSOR BROKE OFF TIES.
TAKAYUKI DID?
ARE YOU SERIOUS?
BUT THERE'S ONE PROBLEM.
MASTER NAOTSUGU HAS A DEEP AND ABIDING HATRED OF ME...
...AND DOES NOT TRUST WHAT I SAY.
IT'S ONLY NATURAL. HAVING EMULATED YOUR PREDECESSOR, I KEPT MASTER NAOTSUGU AT A DISTANCE AND TREATED HIM WITH A SILENT CONTEMPT.
HOWEVER, NOW...

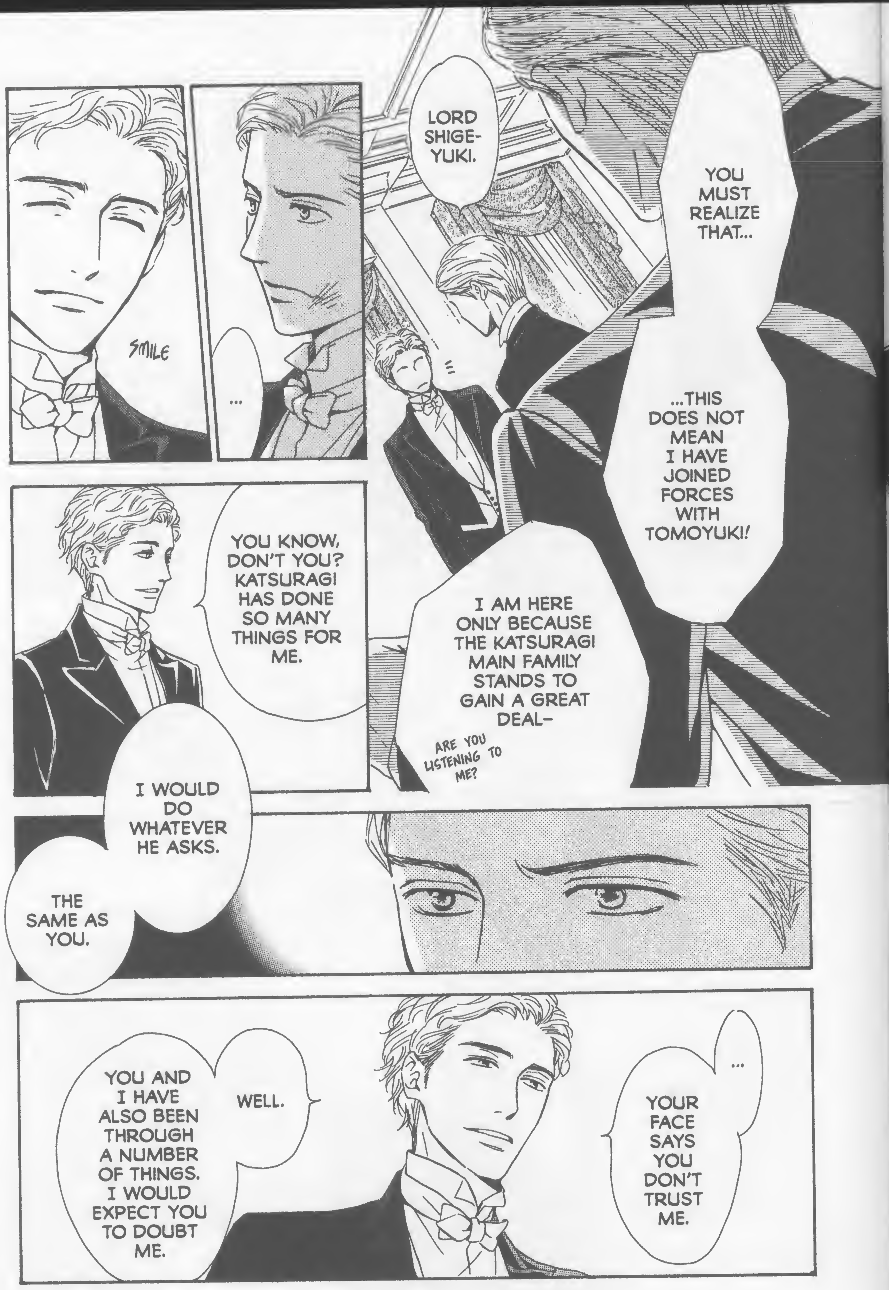

...THAT MAN IS THE KEY TO PROTECTING THE KUZE HOUSE.
MASTER AKIHITO.
PLEASE TRUST ME.
IF IT'S YOU, I'M SURE HE'LL—
...
THE CHANGE IN KATSURAGI... HIS FEELINGS... THOSE WORDS...
THEY ALL MAKE ME SO HAPPY I COULD CRY.
I FEEL LIKE THERE'S NO JOY GREATER THAN THIS, AND YET...

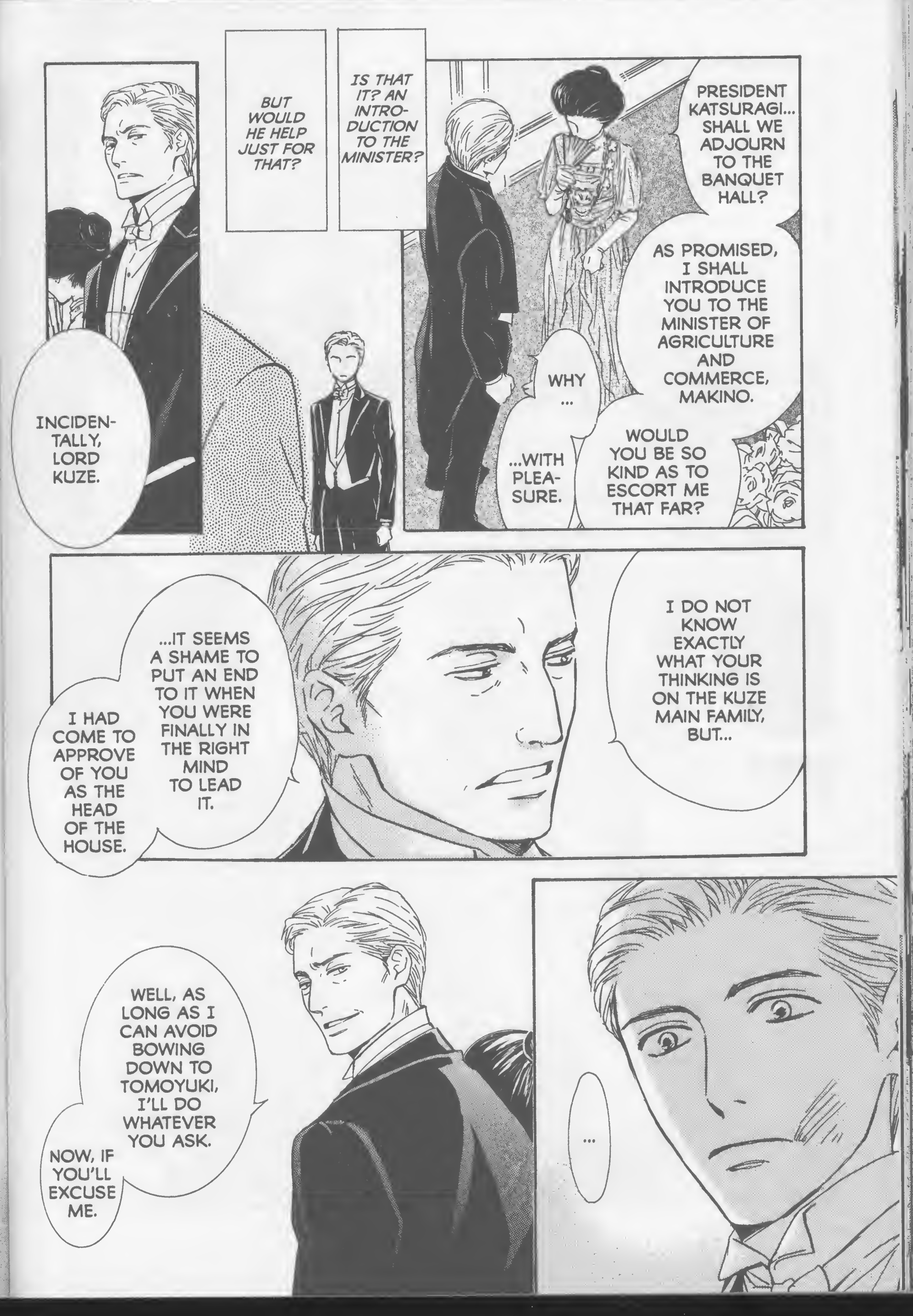

WHY DO I FEEL LIKE SOMETHING IS WRONG?
WHAT IS IT?
KLK
EVERYONE'S WAITING IN HERE.
THE REST IS YOUR ROLE TO PLAY, LORD AKIHITO.
LADY MORIYAMA...
LORD AKIHITO.
DO NOT FORGET WHAT I SAID TO YOU.

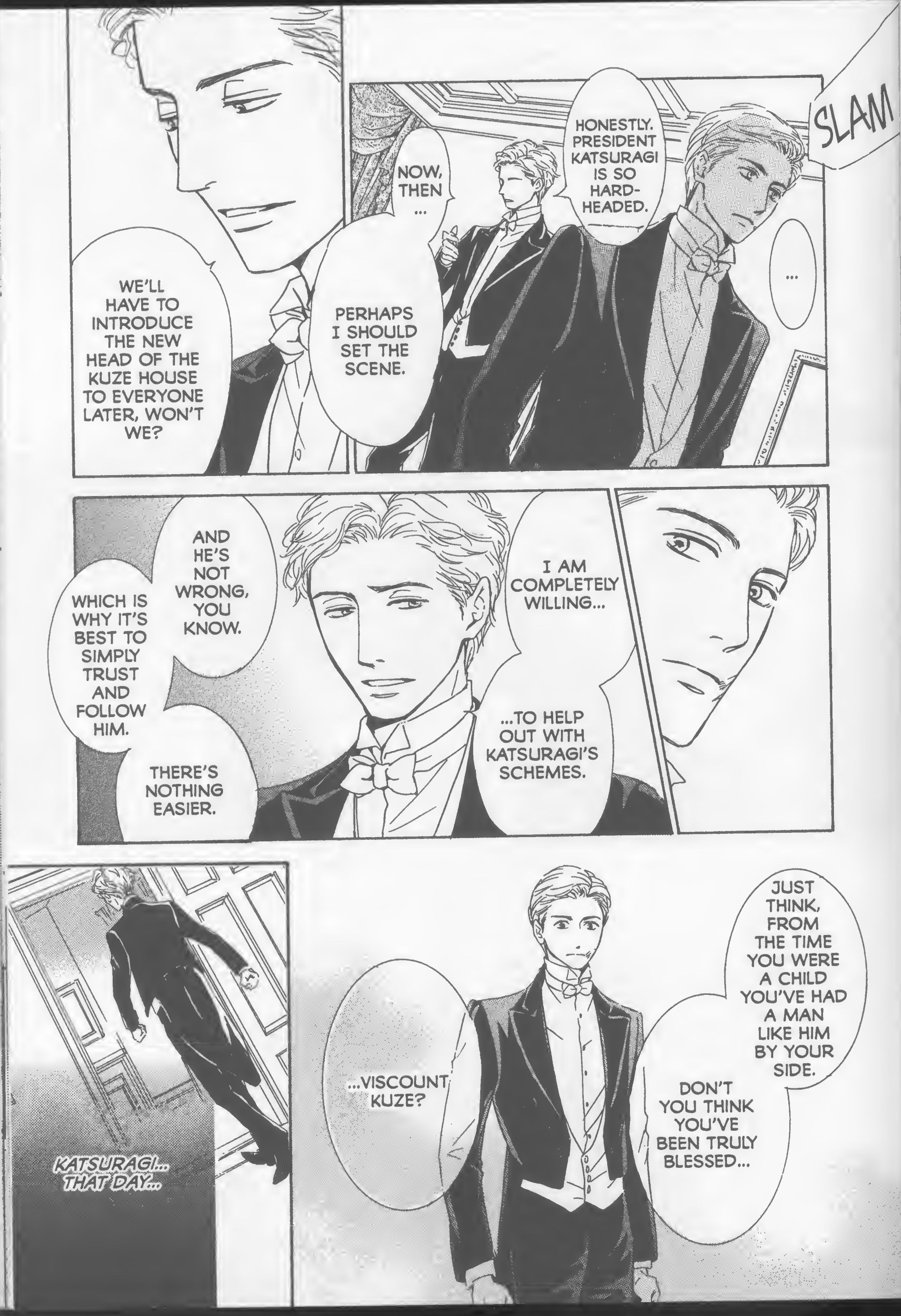

KA-CHAK
...
TAKAYUKI KATSURAGI AND LORD SHIGEYUKI SAIONJI....
THAT'S A SURPRISE. ARE THE TWO OF THEM REALLY IN AGREEMENT WITH KATSURAGI?
AND HOW DID LORD SHIGEYUKI BRING THE STUBBORN TAKAYUKI AROUND?

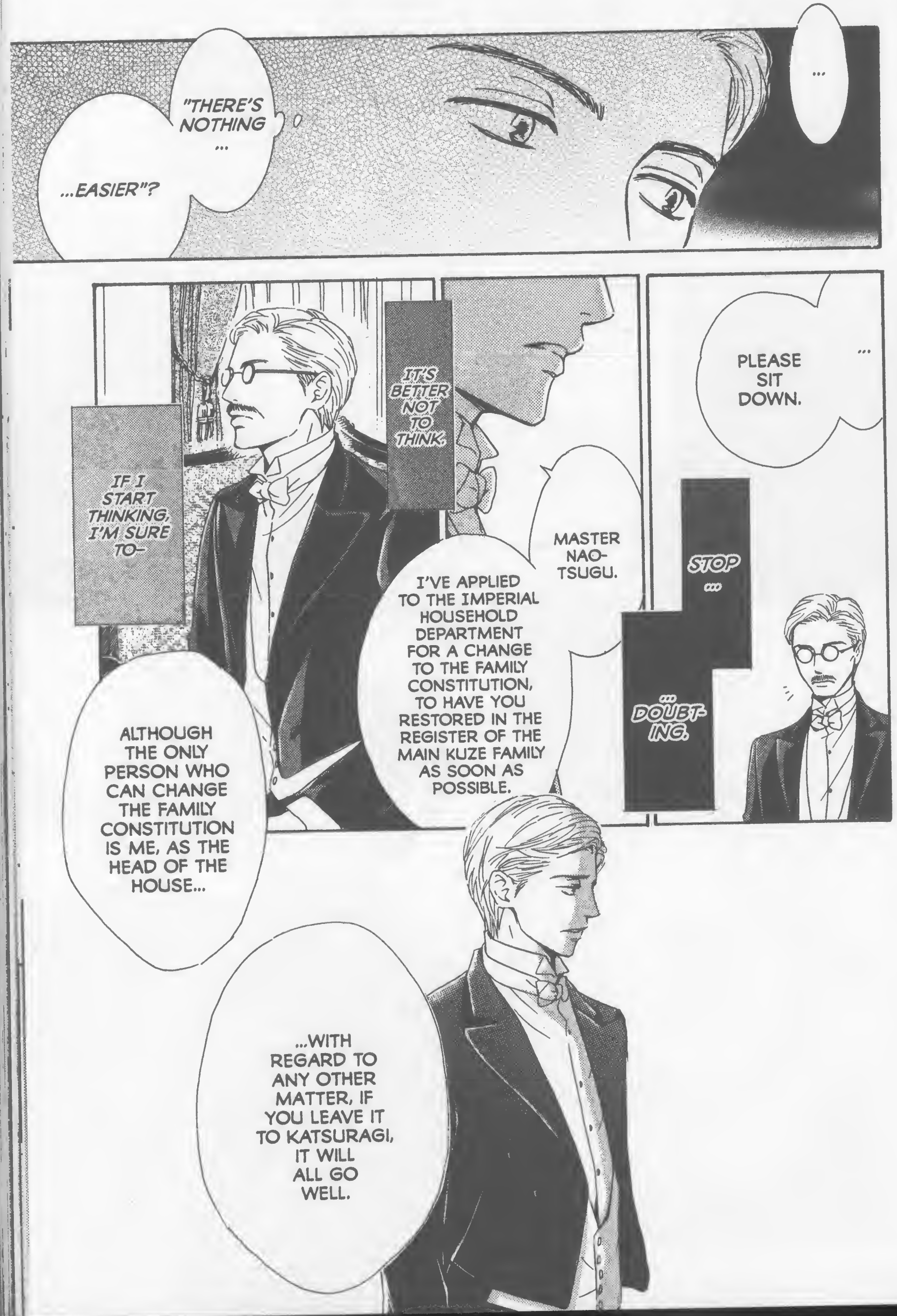

KREEK
SO THEN...
...!
...THAT MAN MUST BE...
...NAOTSUGU KUZE.

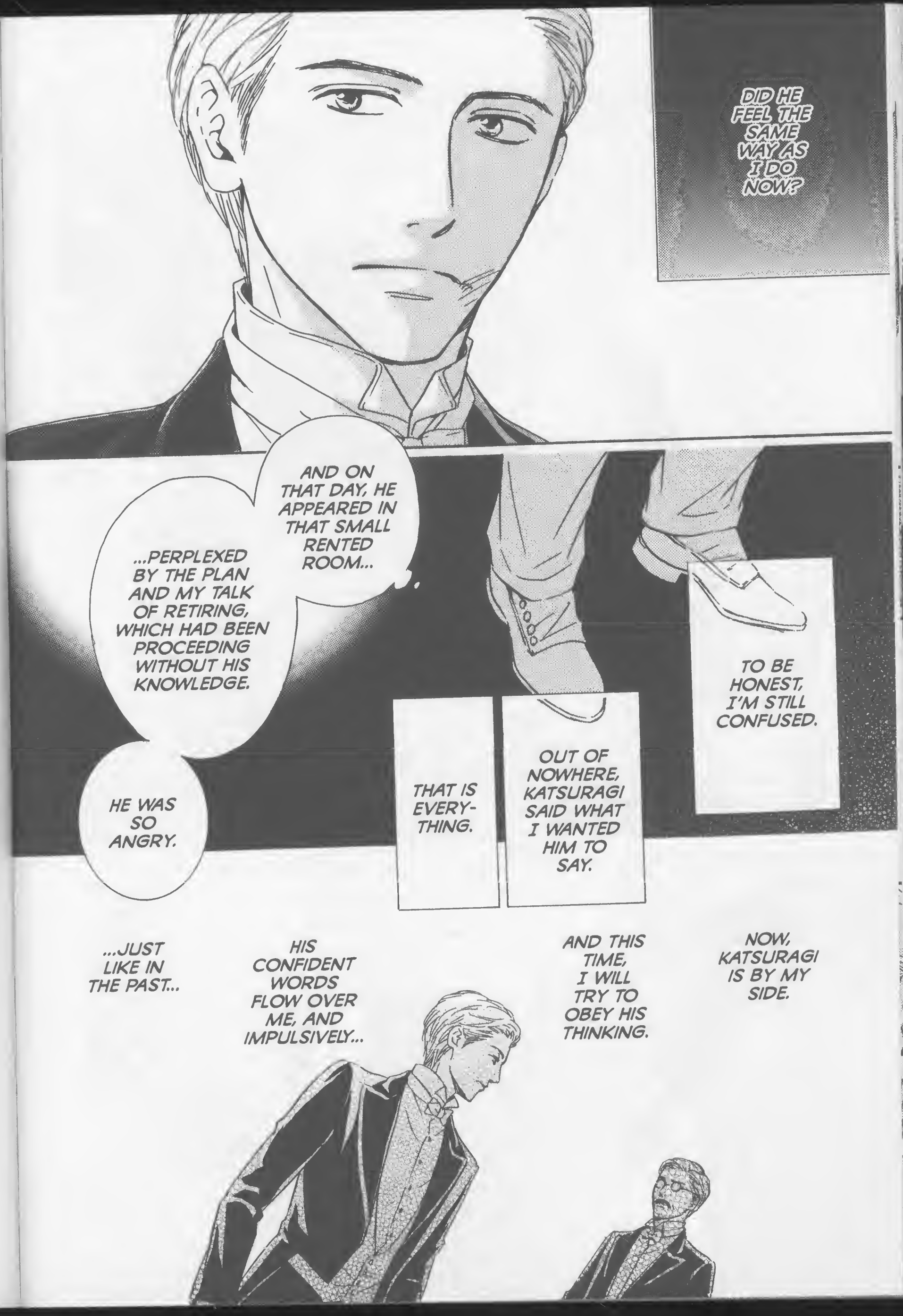

MY LORD.
MY FATHER'S HALF-BROTHER, THE ILLEGITIMATE CHILD OF MY GRANDFATHER...
THIS WAY, IF YOU WILL.
...
KATSURAGI CALLED HIM HERE TO BECOME THE NEXT HEAD OF THE HOUSE.
IT WAS QUITE THE ORDEAL TO INVITE MASTER NAOTSUGU HERE.
HE WAS CONTINUALLY MOVING FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT.
TAP
TAP
SO THE RUMOR THAT HE'S SICKLY IS TRUE...
HE'S INCREDIBLY QUIET, SAYING ALMOST NOTHING.
EXACTLY WHAT KIND OF PERSON IS HE?
YOU'VE ...
...COOPERATED WITH TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI, I SEE.
EVEN THOUGH I RECEIVED NO REPLY DESPITE HOW MANY LETTERS I SENT ABOUT THE "COPY."
MPH
PLEASE DO NOT MISUNDERSTAND THE SITUATION.

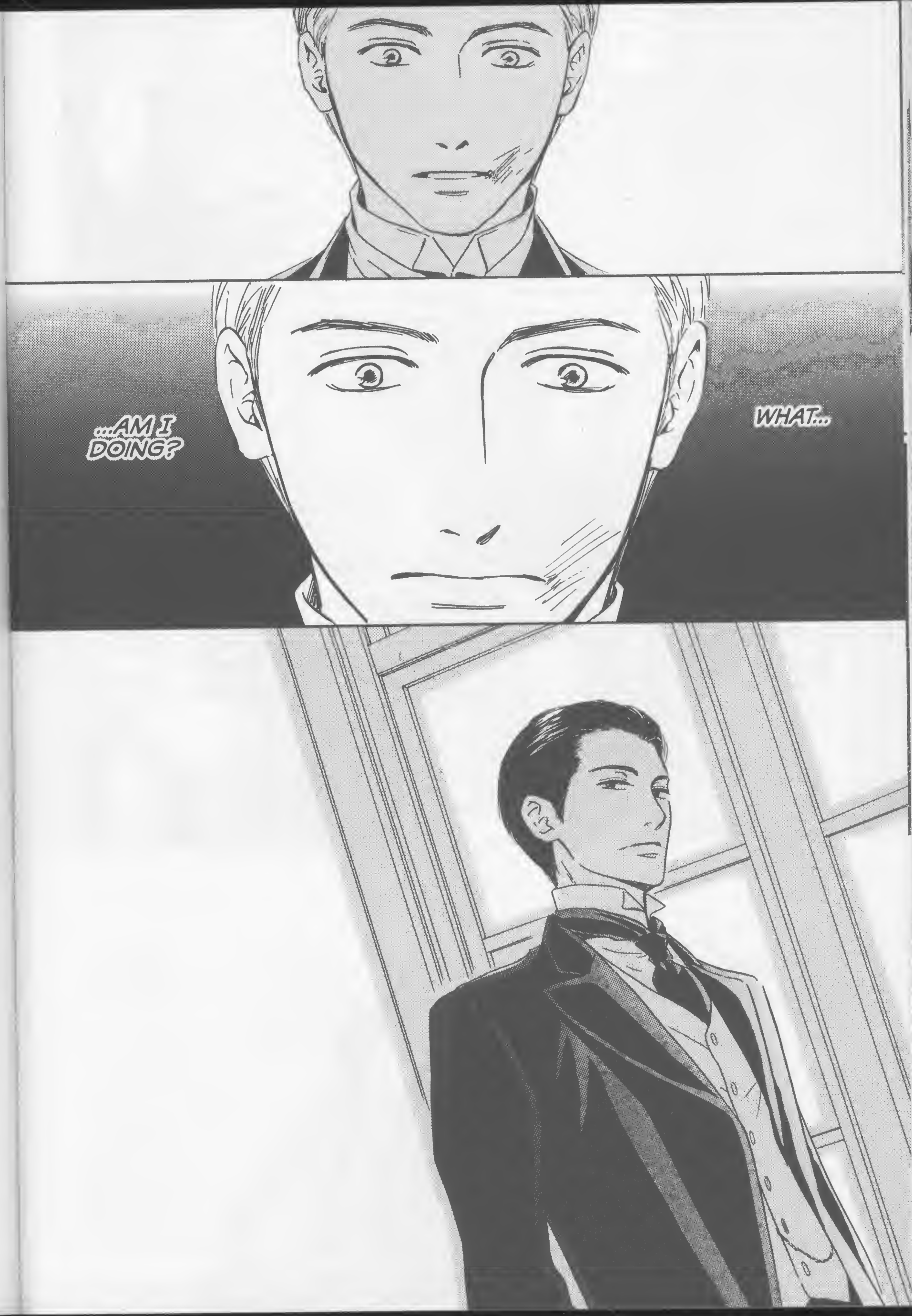

YOU MUST REALIZE THAT...
LORD SHIGEYUKI.
...THIS DOES NOT MEAN I HAVE JOINED FORCES WITH TOMOYUKI!
I AM HERE ONLY BECAUSE THE KATSURAGI MAIN FAMILY STANDS TO GAIN A GREAT DEAL–
ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?
...
SMILE
YOU KNOW, DON'T YOU? KATSURAGI HAS DONE SO MANY THINGS FOR ME.
I WOULD DO WHATEVER HE ASKS.
THE SAME AS YOU.
...
YOUR FACE SAYS YOU DON'T TRUST ME.
WELL.
YOU AND I HAVE ALSO BEEN THROUGH A NUMBER OF THINGS. I WOULD EXPECT YOU TO DOUBT ME.

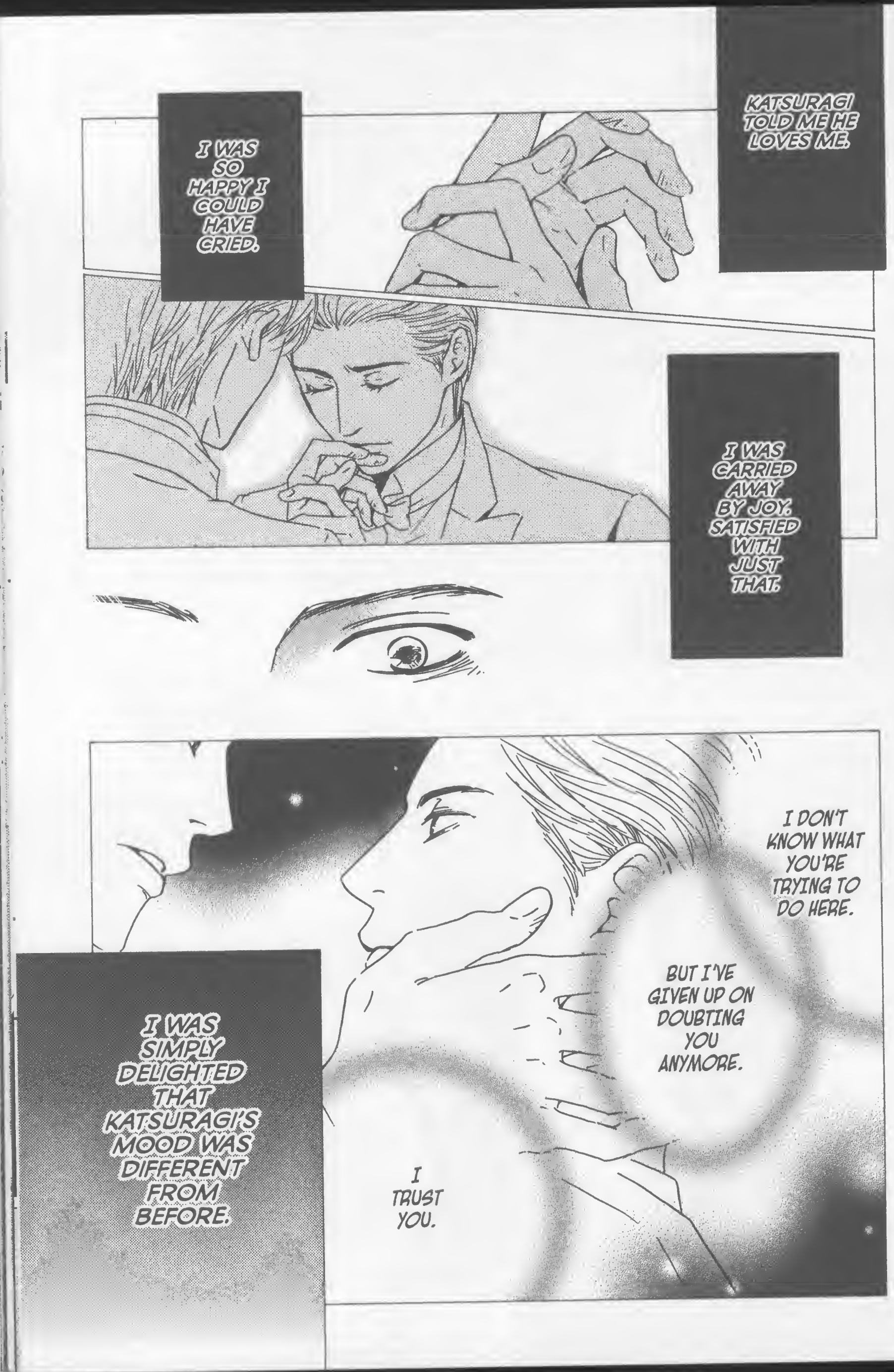

PRESIDENT KATSURAGI... SHALL WE ADJOURN TO THE BANQUET HALL?
AS PROMISED, I SHALL INTRODUCE YOU TO THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE, MAKINO.
WHY...
WOULD YOU BE SO KIND AS TO ESCORT ME THAT FAR?
...WITH PLEASURE.
IS THAT IT? AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MINISTER?
BUT WOULD HE HELP JUST FOR THAT?
INCIDENTALLY, LORD KUZE.
I DO NOT KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOUR THINKING IS ON THE KUZE MAIN FAMILY, BUT...
...IT SEEMS A SHAME TO PUT AN END TO IT WHEN YOU WERE FINALLY IN THE RIGHT MIND TO LEAD IT.
I HAD COME TO APPROVE OF YOU AS THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE.
...
WELL, AS LONG AS I CAN AVOID BOWING DOWN TO TOMOYUKI, I'LL DO WHATEVER YOU ASK.
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.

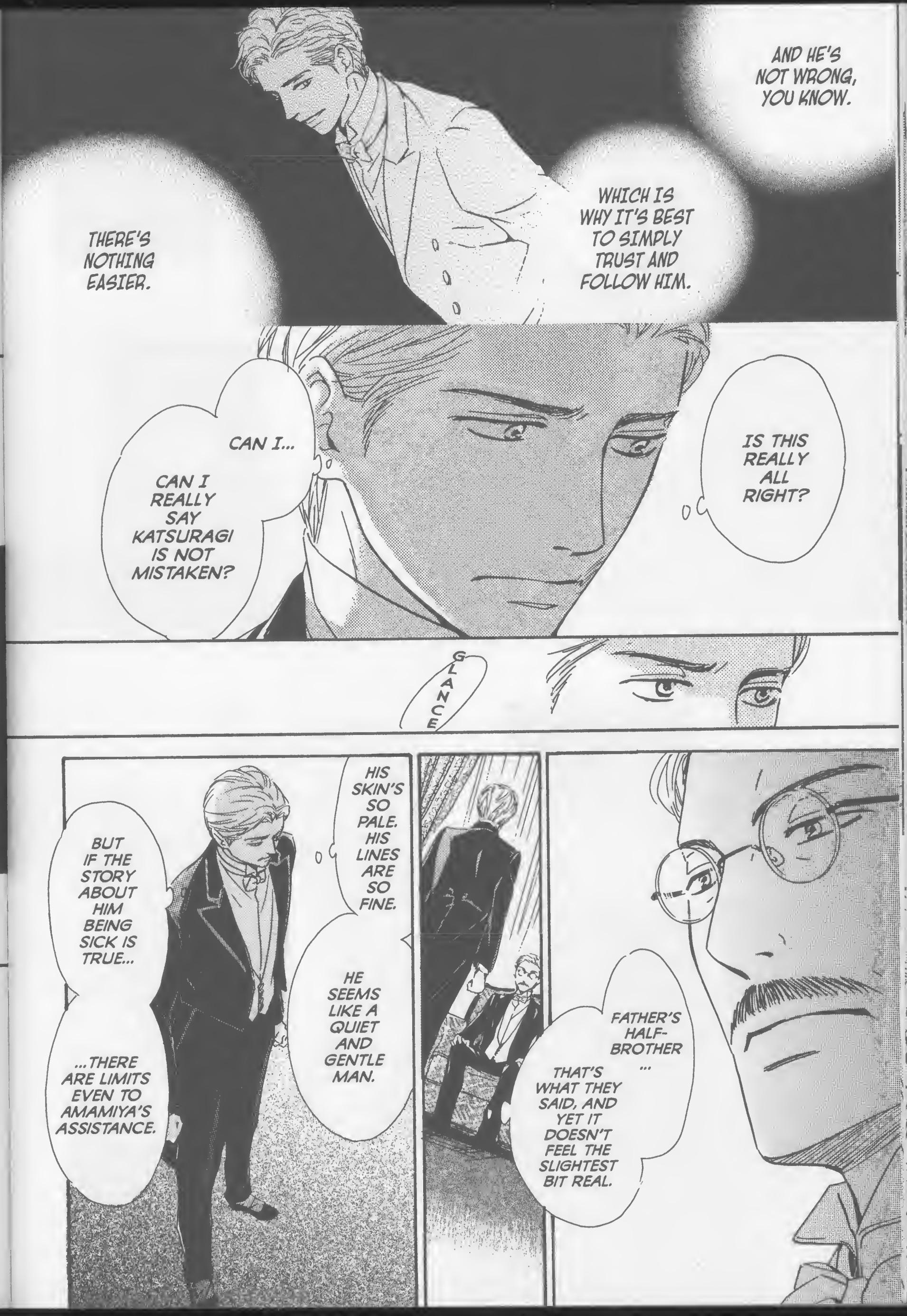

SLAM
...
HONESTLY. PRESIDENT KATSURAGI IS SO HARD-HEADED.
NOW, THEN ...
PERHAPS I SHOULD SET THE SCENE.
WE'LL HAVE TO INTRODUCE THE NEW HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE TO EVERYONE LATER, WON'T WE?
I AM COMPLETELY WILLING...
...TO HELP OUT WITH KATSURAGI'S SCHEMES.
AND HE'S NOT WRONG, YOU KNOW.
WHICH IS WHY IT'S BEST TO SIMPLY TRUST AND FOLLOW HIM.
THERE'S NOTHING EASIER.
JUST THINK, FROM THE TIME YOU WERE A CHILD YOU'VE HAD A MAN LIKE HIM BY YOUR SIDE.
DON'T YOU THINK YOU'VE BEEN TRULY BLESSED...
...VISCOUNT KUZE?
KATSURAGI... THAT DAY...

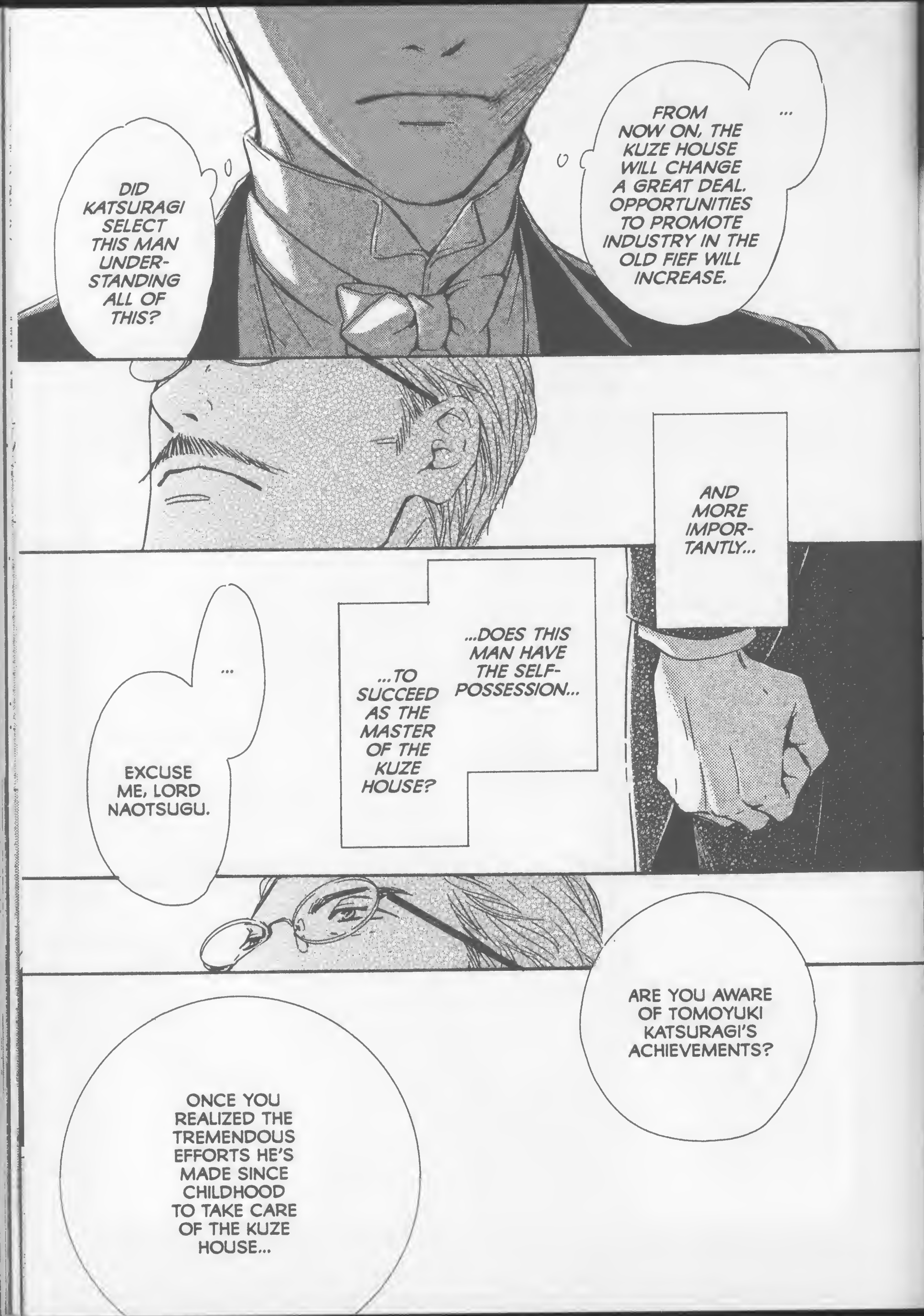

...
"THERE'S NOTHING ...
...EASIER"?
...
PLEASE SIT DOWN.
IT'S BETTER NOT TO THINK.
IF I START THINKING, I'M SURE TO–
STOP ...
... DOUBTING.
MASTER NAOTSUGU.
I'VE APPLIED TO THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT FOR A CHANGE TO THE FAMILY CONSTITUTION, TO HAVE YOU RESTORED IN THE REGISTER OF THE MAIN KUZE FAMILY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
ALTHOUGH THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN CHANGE THE FAMILY CONSTITUTION IS ME, AS THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE...
...WITH REGARD TO ANY OTHER MATTER, IF YOU LEAVE IT TO KATSURAGI, IT WILL ALL GO WELL.

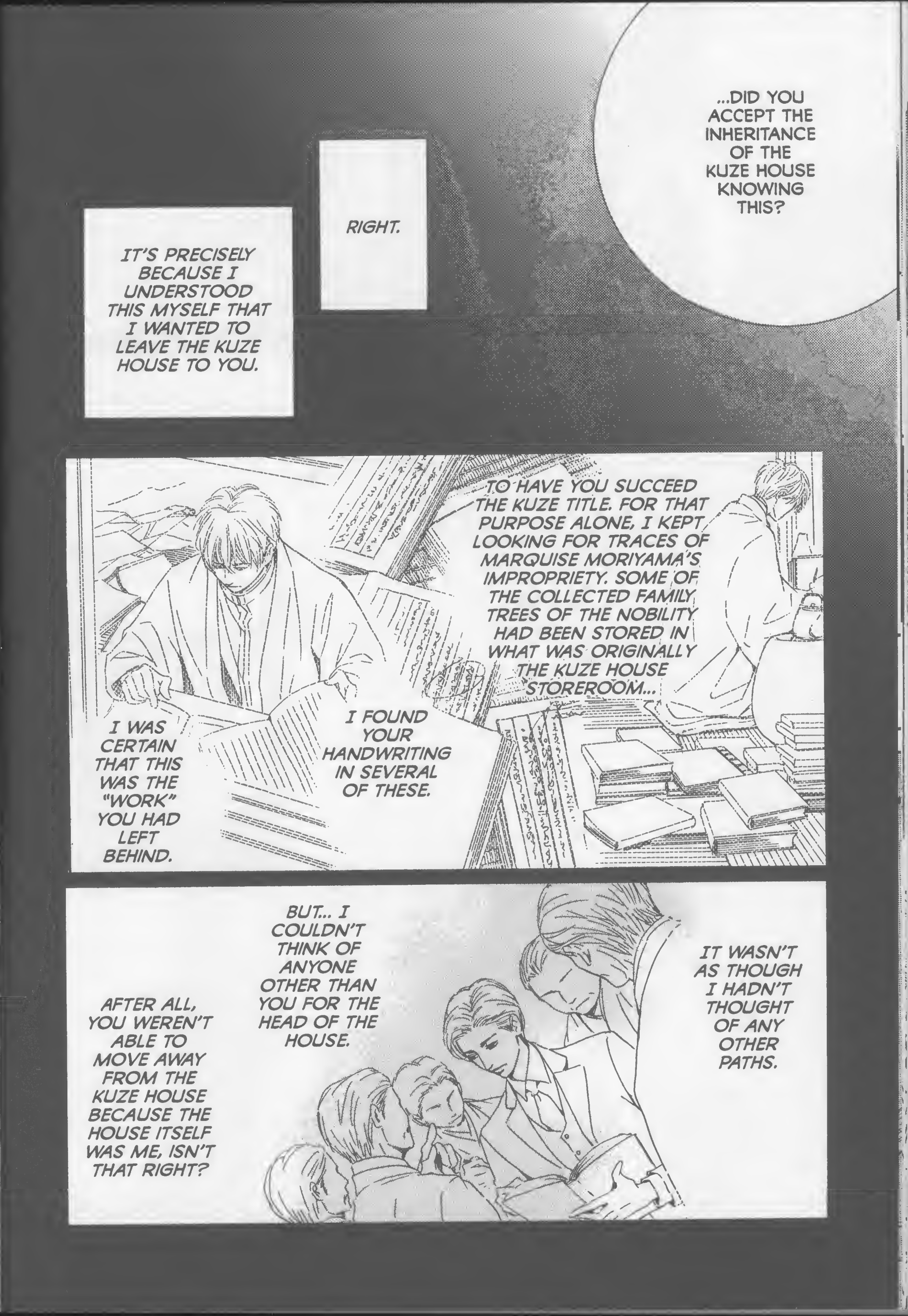

DID HE FEEL THE SAME WAY AS I DO NOW?
TO BE HONEST, I'M STILL CONFUSED.
OUT OF NOWHERE, KATSURAGI SAID WHAT I WANTED HIM TO SAY.
THAT IS EVERYTHING.
AND ON THAT DAY, HE APPEARED IN THAT SMALL RENTED ROOM...
...PERPLEXED BY THE PLAN AND MY TALK OF RETIRING, WHICH HAD BEEN PROCEEDING WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE.
HE WAS SO ANGRY.
NOW, KATSURAGI IS BY MY SIDE.
AND THIS TIME, I WILL TRY TO OBEY HIS THINKING.
HIS CONFIDENT WORDS FLOW OVER ME, AND IMPULSIVELY...
...JUST LIKE IN THE PAST...

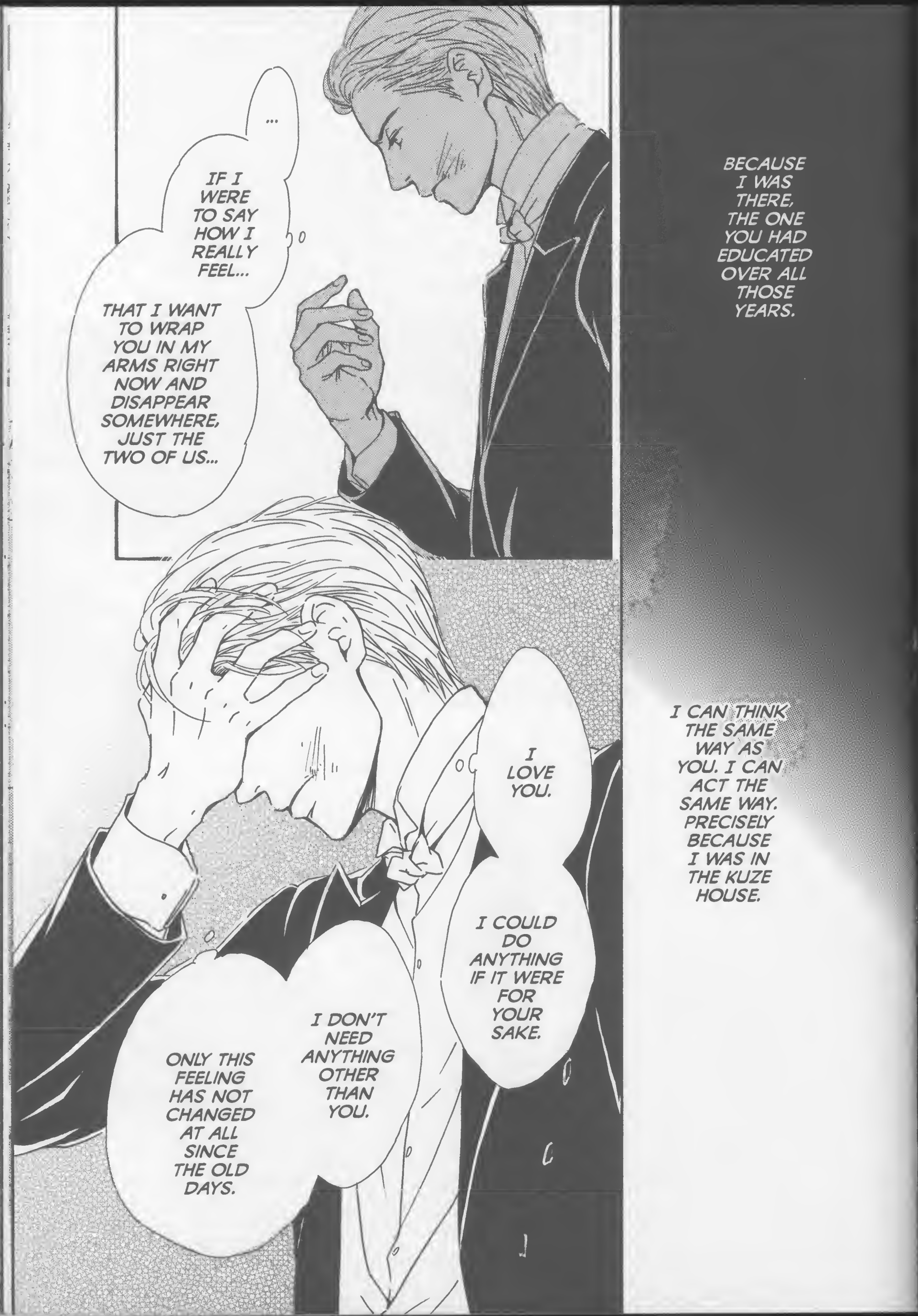

WHAT...
...AM I DOING?

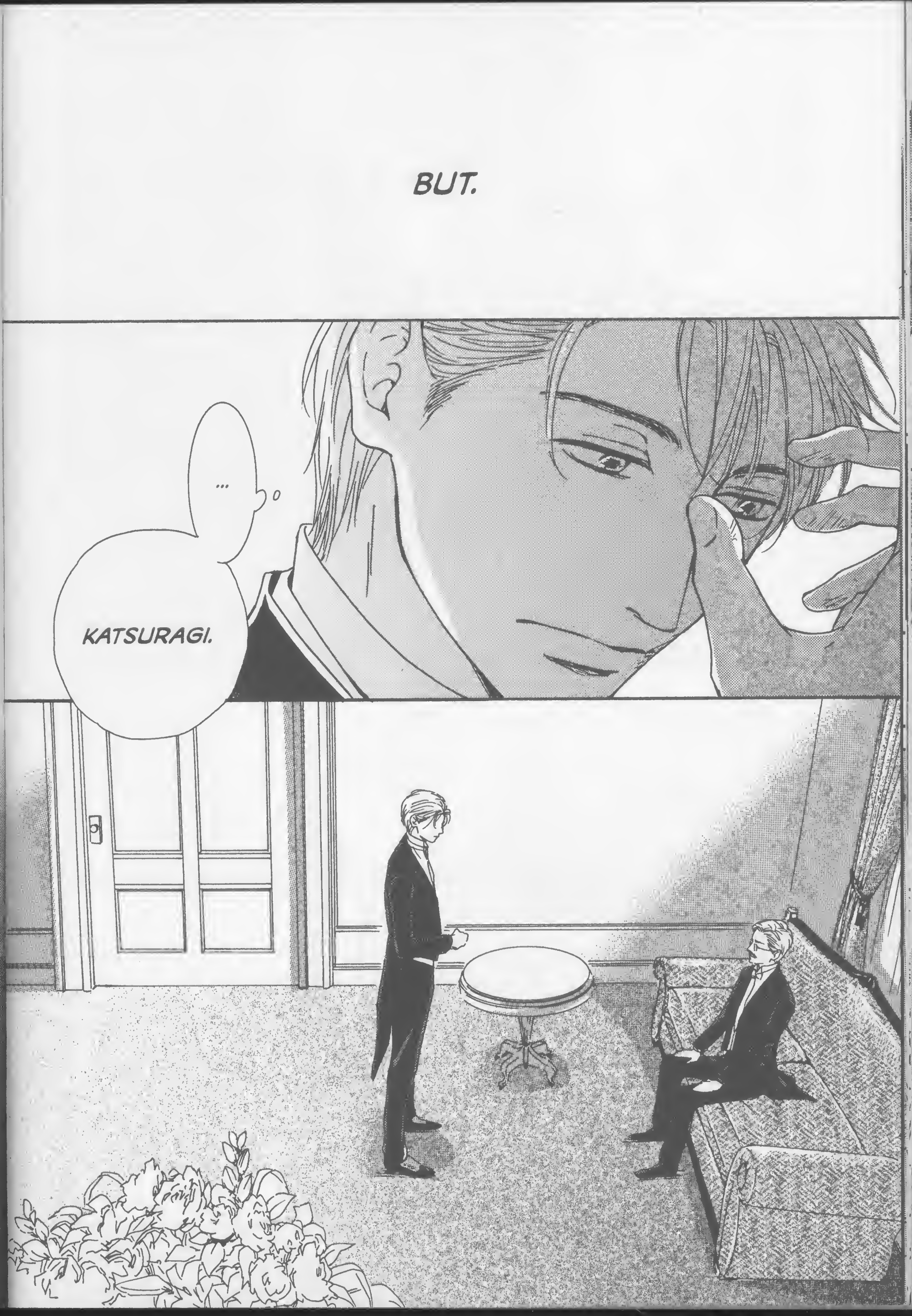

KATSURAGI TOLD ME HE LOVES ME.
I WAS SO HAPPY I COULD HAVE CRIED.
I WAS CARRIED AWAY BY JOY. SATISFIED WITH JUST THAT.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO HERE.
BUT I'VE GIVEN UP ON DOUBTING YOU ANYMORE.
I TRUST YOU.
I WAS SIMPLY DELIGHTED THAT KATSURAGI'S MOOD WAS DIFFERENT FROM BEFORE.

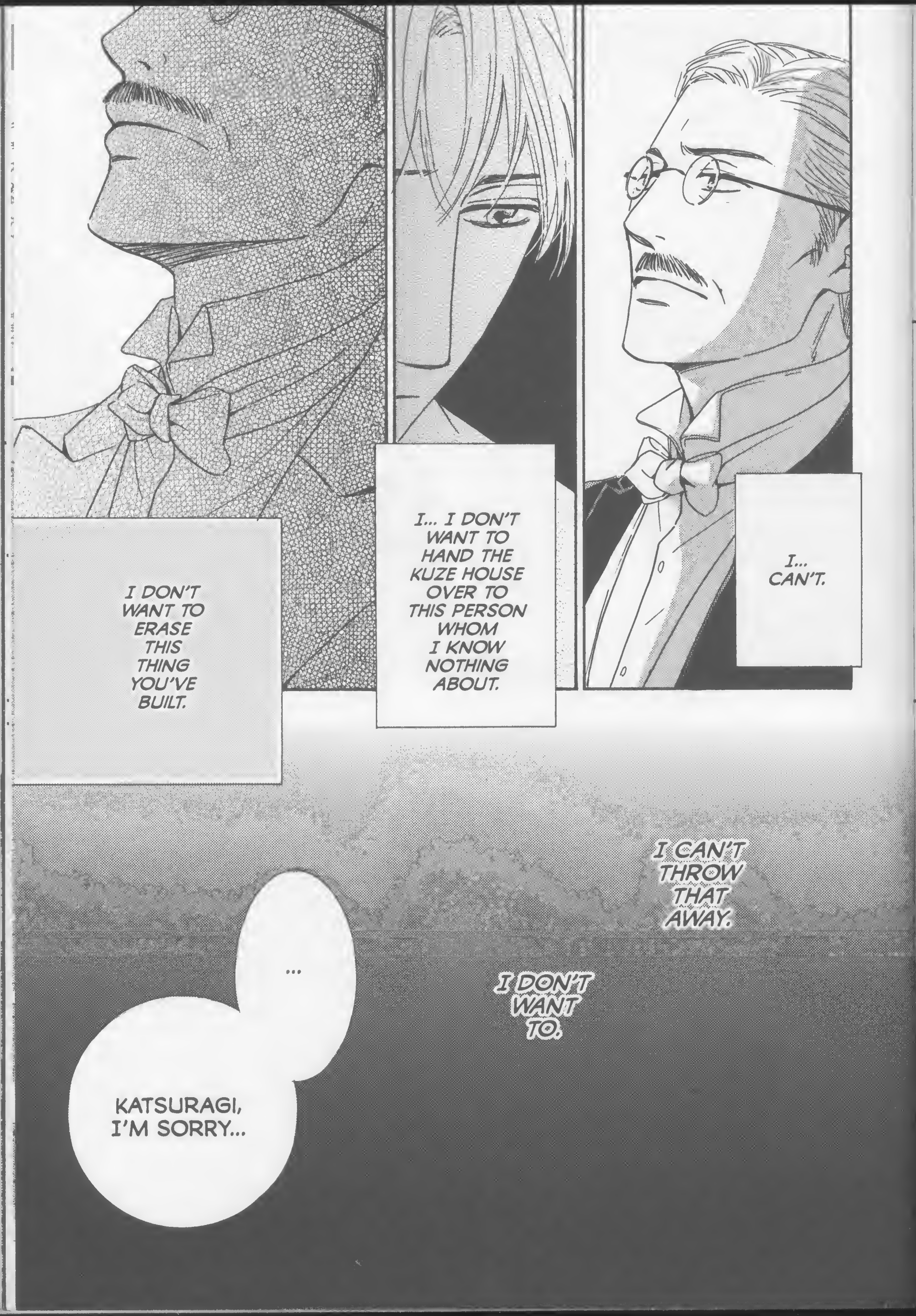

AND HE'S NOT WRONG, YOU KNOW.
WHICH IS WHY IT'S BEST TO SIMPLY TRUST AND FOLLOW HIM.
THERE'S NOTHING EASIER.
IS THIS REALLY ALL RIGHT?
CAN I...
CAN I REALLY SAY KATSURAGI IS NOT MISTAKEN?
GLANCE
FATHER'S HALF-BROTHER ...
THAT'S WHAT THEY SAID, AND YET IT DOESN'T FEEL THE SLIGHTEST BIT REAL.
HIS SKIN'S SO PALE. HIS LINES ARE SO FINE.
HE SEEMS LIKE A QUIET AND GENTLE MAN.
BUT IF THE STORY ABOUT HIM BEING SICK IS TRUE...
...THERE ARE LIMITS EVEN TO AMAMIYA'S ASSISTANCE.

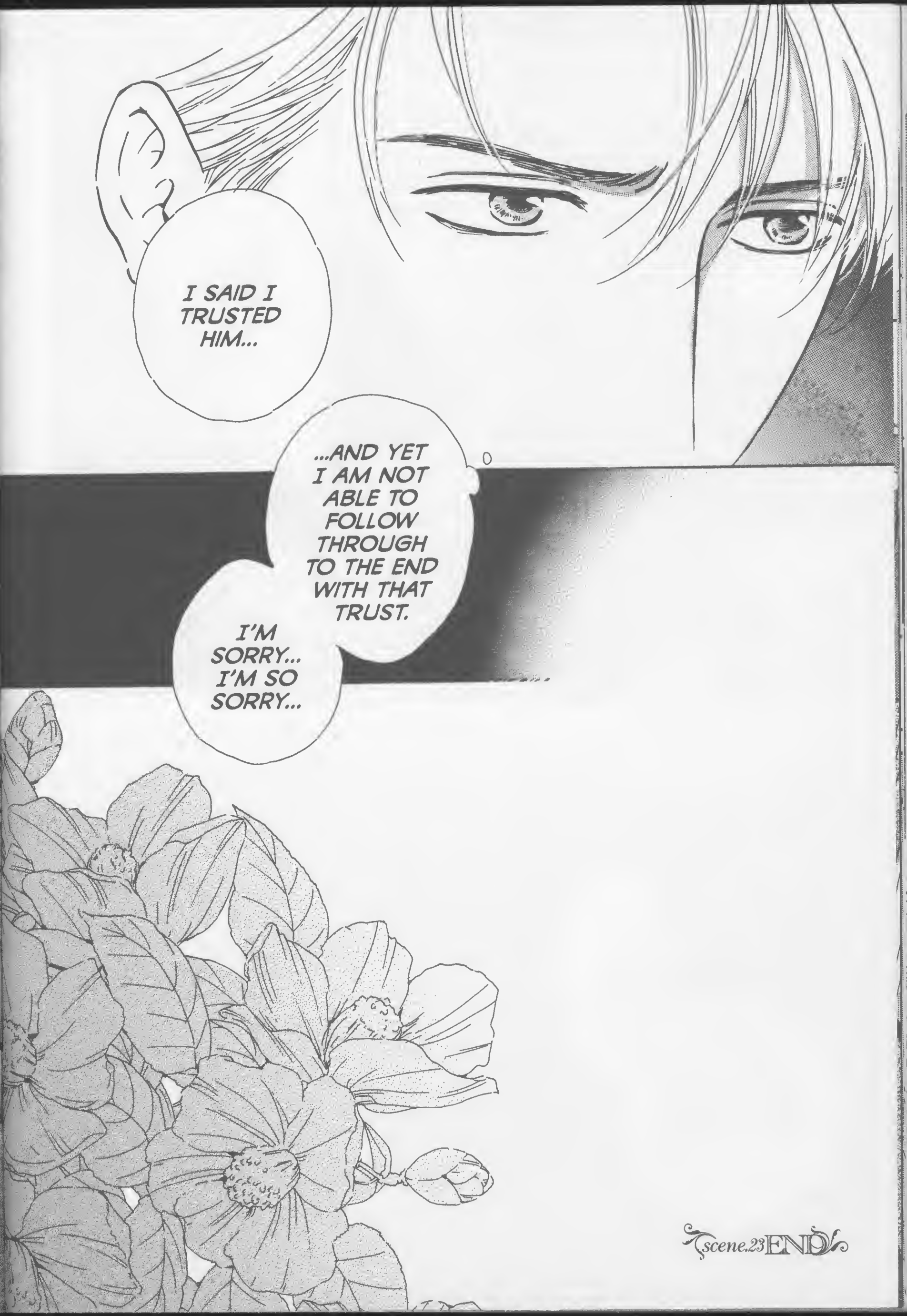

...
FROM NOW ON, THE KUZE HOUSE WILL CHANGE A GREAT DEAL. OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE INDUSTRY IN THE OLD FIEF WILL INCREASE.
DID KATSURAGI SELECT THIS MAN UNDERSTANDING ALL OF THIS?
AND MORE IMPORTANTLY...
...DOES THIS MAN HAVE THE SELF-POSSESSION...
...TO SUCCEED AS THE MASTER OF THE KUZE HOUSE?
...
EXCUSE ME, LORD NAOTSUGU.
ARE YOU AWARE OF TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI'S ACHIEVEMENTS?
ONCE YOU REALIZED THE TREMENDOUS EFFORTS HE'S MADE SINCE CHILDHOOD TO TAKE CARE OF THE KUZE HOUSE...


...DID YOU ACCEPT THE INHERITANCE OF THE KUZE HOUSE KNOWING THIS?
RIGHT.
IT'S PRECISELY BECAUSE I UNDERSTOOD THIS MYSELF THAT I WANTED TO LEAVE THE KUZE HOUSE TO YOU.
TO HAVE YOU SUCCEED THE KUZE TITLE. FOR THAT PURPOSE ALONE, I KEPT LOOKING FOR TRACES OF MARQUISE MORIYAMA'S IMPROPRIETY. SOME OF THE COLLECTED FAMILY TREES OF THE NOBILITY HAD BEEN STORED IN WHAT WAS ORIGINALLY THE KUZE HOUSE STOREROOM...
I FOUND YOUR HANDWRITING IN SEVERAL OF THESE.
I WAS CERTAIN THAT THIS WAS THE "WORK" YOU HAD LEFT BEHIND.
IT WASN'T AS THOUGH I HADN'T THOUGHT OF ANY OTHER PATHS.
BUT... I COULDN'T THINK OF ANYONE OTHER THAN YOU FOR THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE.
AFTER ALL, YOU WEREN'T ABLE TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE KUZE HOUSE BECAUSE THE HOUSE ITSELF WAS ME, ISN'T THAT RIGHT?

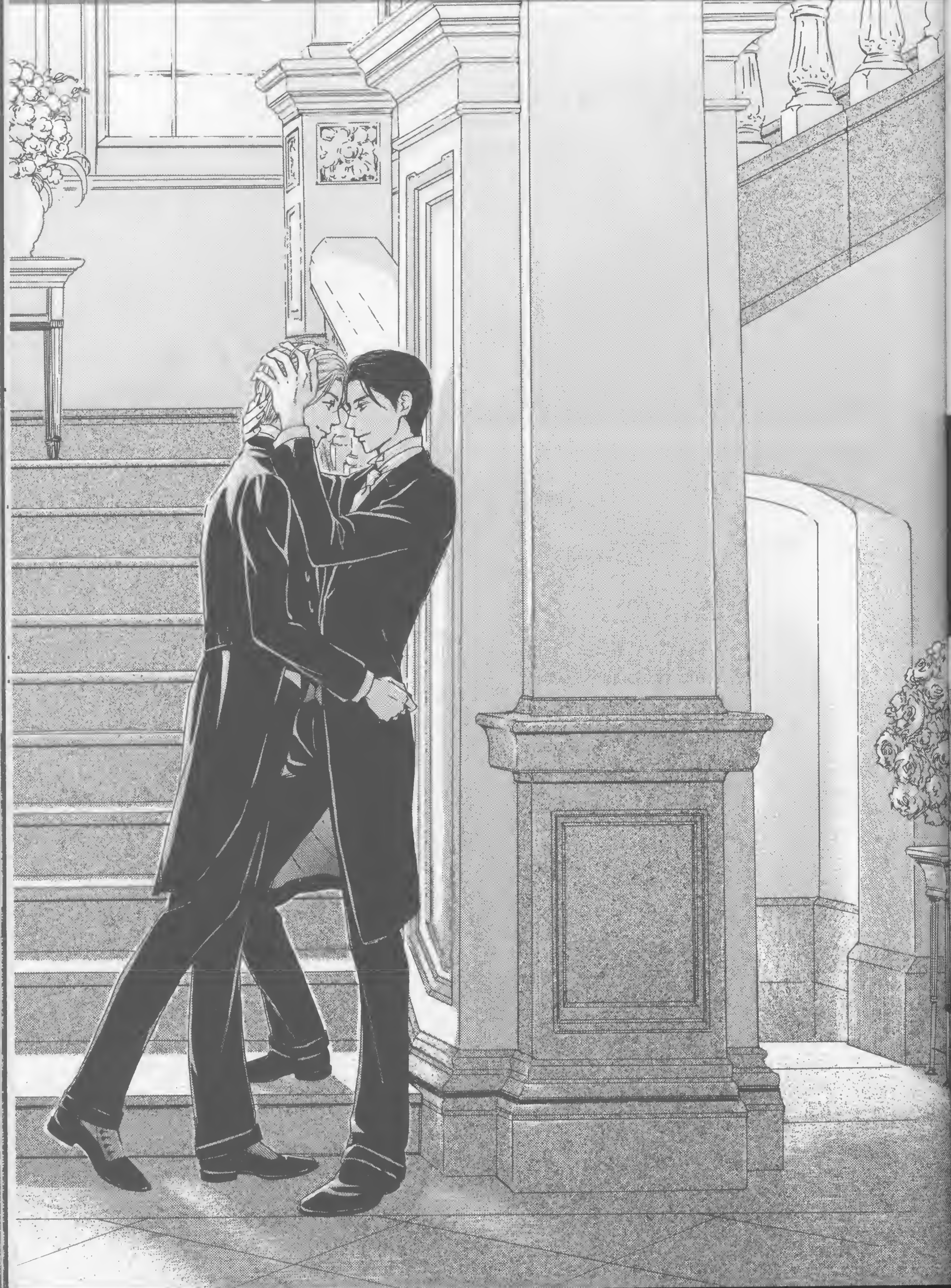

BECAUSE I WAS THERE, THE ONE YOU HAD EDUCATED OVER ALL THOSE YEARS.
I CAN THINK THE SAME WAY AS YOU. I CAN ACT THE SAME WAY. PRECISELY BECAUSE I WAS IN THE KUZE HOUSE.
...
IF I WERE TO SAY HOW I REALLY FEEL...
THAT I WANT TO WRAP YOU IN MY ARMS RIGHT NOW AND DISAPPEAR SOMEWHERE, JUST THE TWO OF US...
I LOVE YOU.
I COULD DO ANYTHING IF IT WERE FOR YOUR SAKE.
I DON'T NEED ANYTHING OTHER THAN YOU.
ONLY THIS FEELING HAS NOT CHANGED AT ALL SINCE THE OLD DAYS.

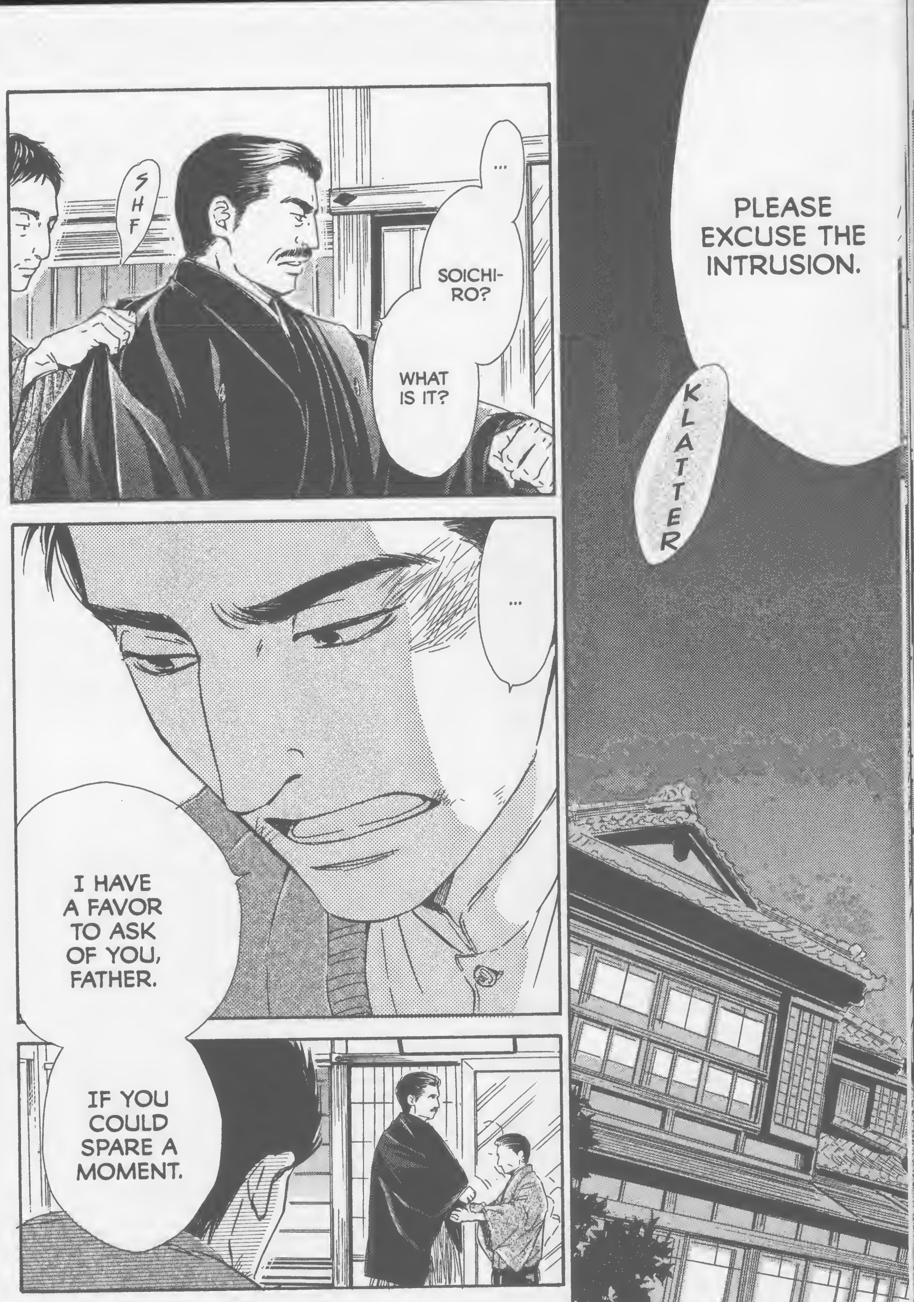

BUT.
...
KATSURAGI.

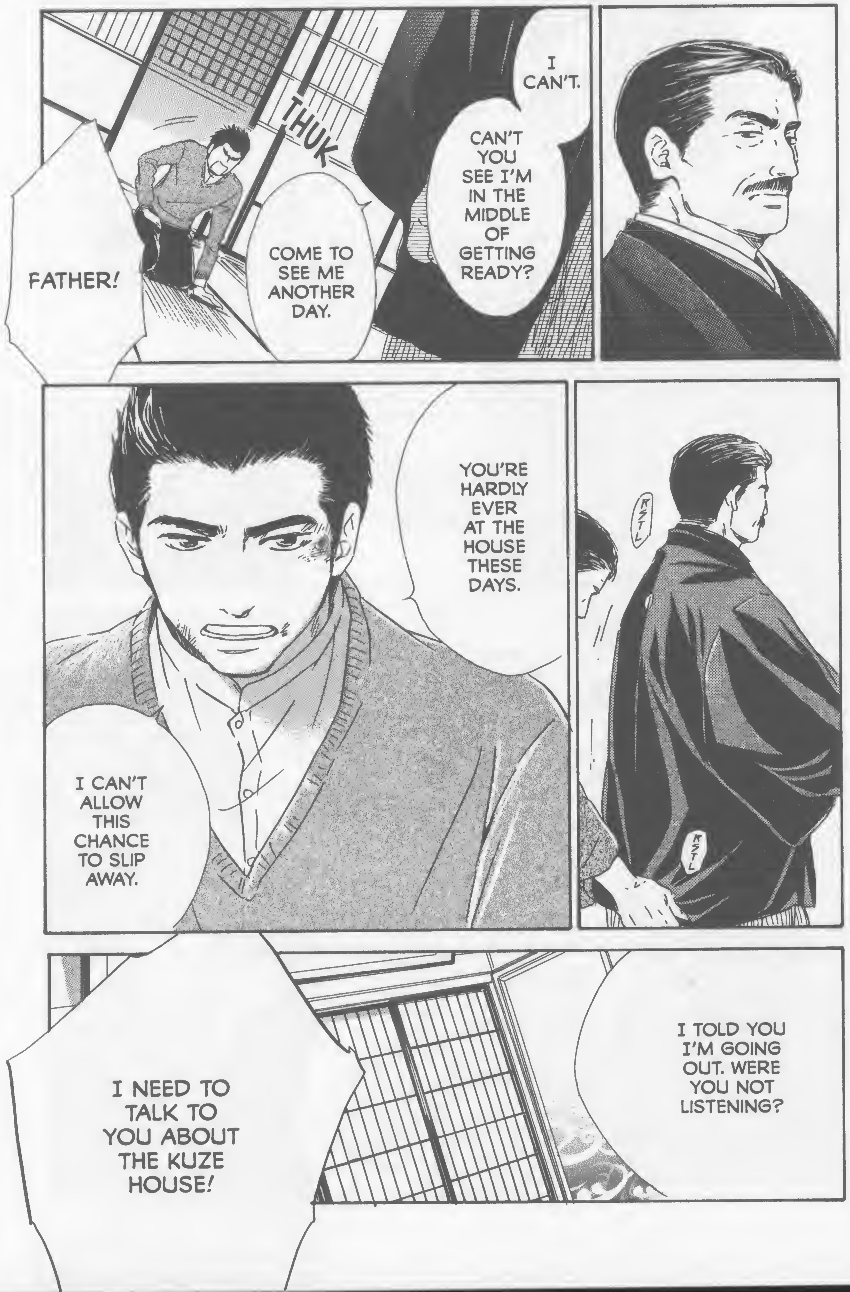

I... CAN'T.
I... I DON'T WANT TO HAND THE KUZE HOUSE OVER TO THIS PERSON WHOM I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT.
I DON'T WANT TO ERASE THIS THING YOU'VE BUILT.
I CAN'T THROW THAT AWAY.
I DON'T WANT TO.
...
KATSURAGI, I'M SORRY...

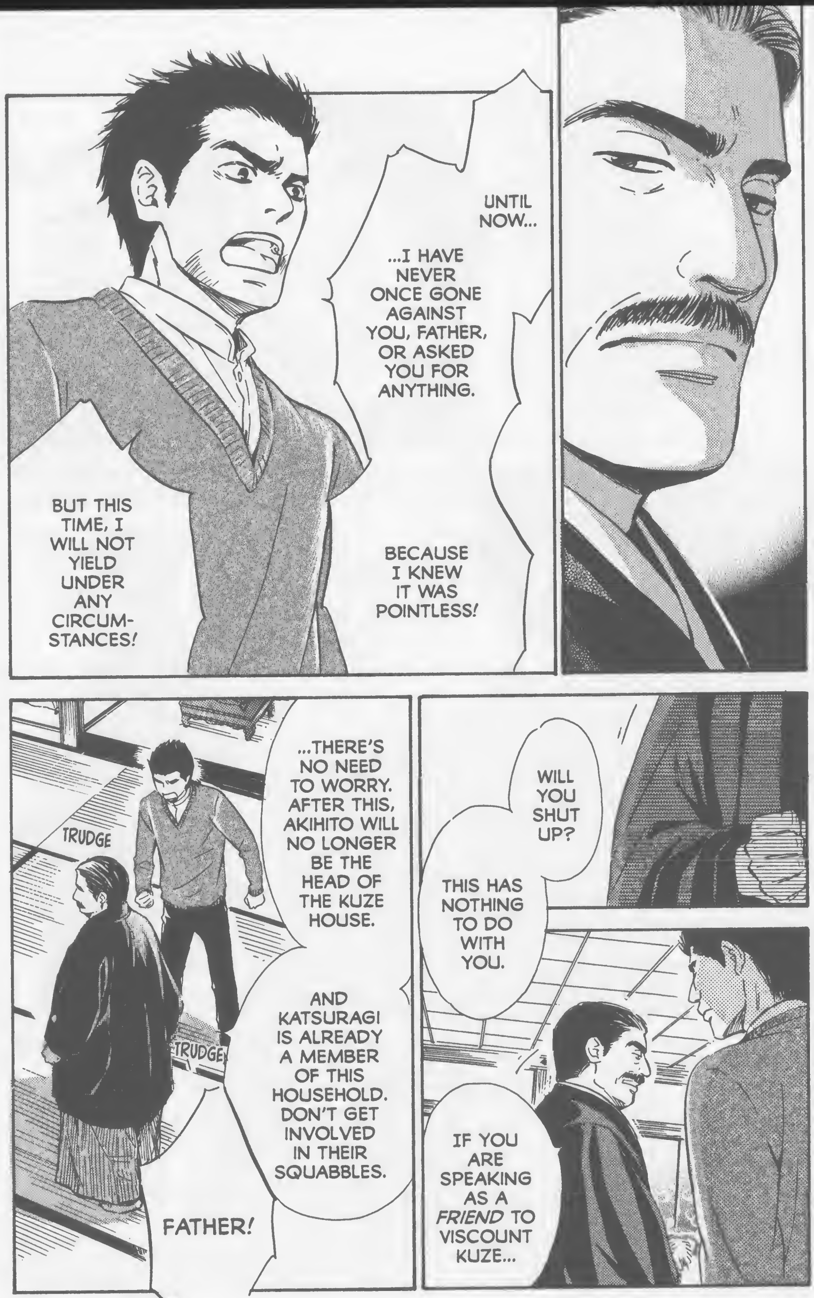

I SAID I TRUSTED HIM...
...AND YET I AM NOT ABLE TO FOLLOW THROUGH TO THE END WITH THAT TRUST.
I'M SORRY... I'M SO SORRY...
scene.23 END

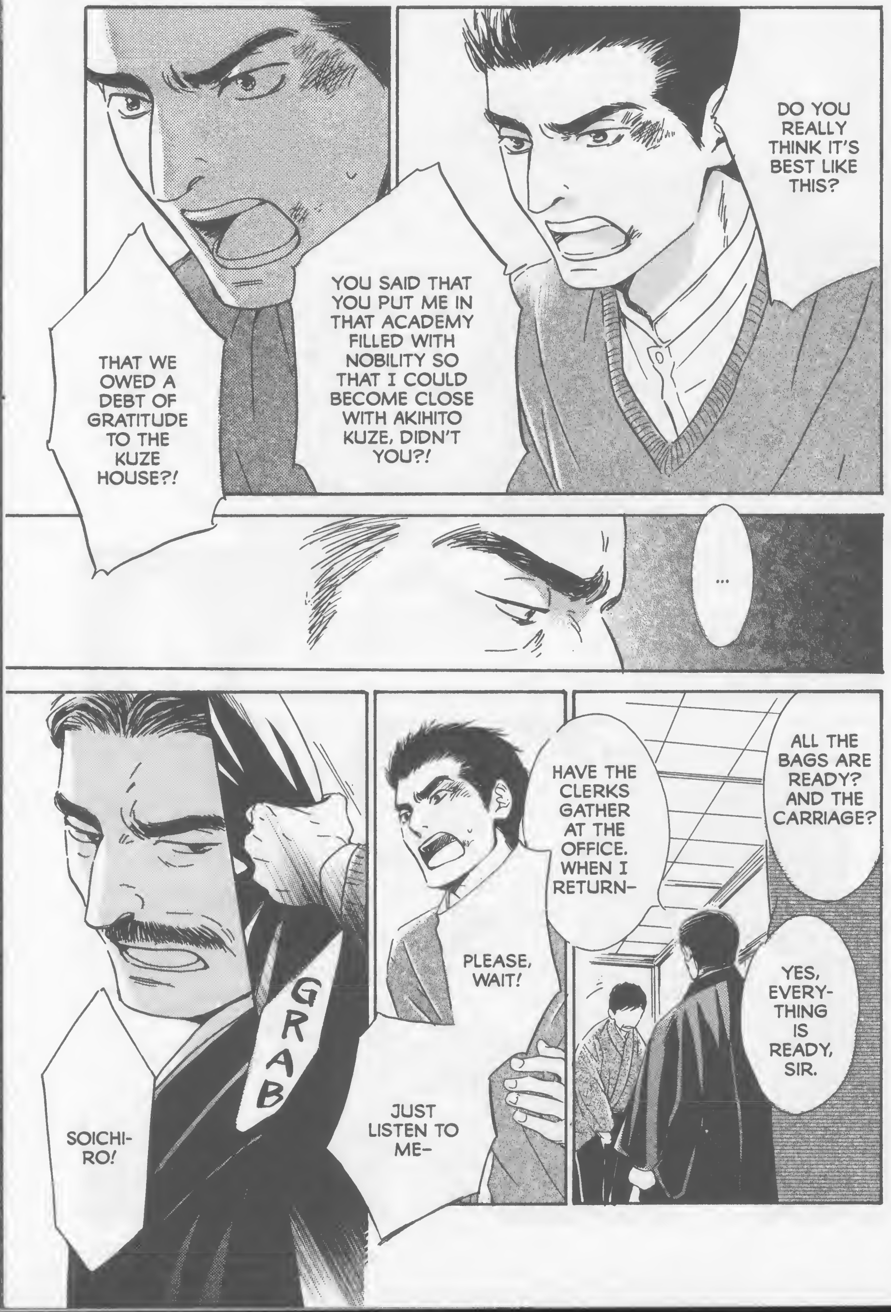
Blue Morning: Scene 24

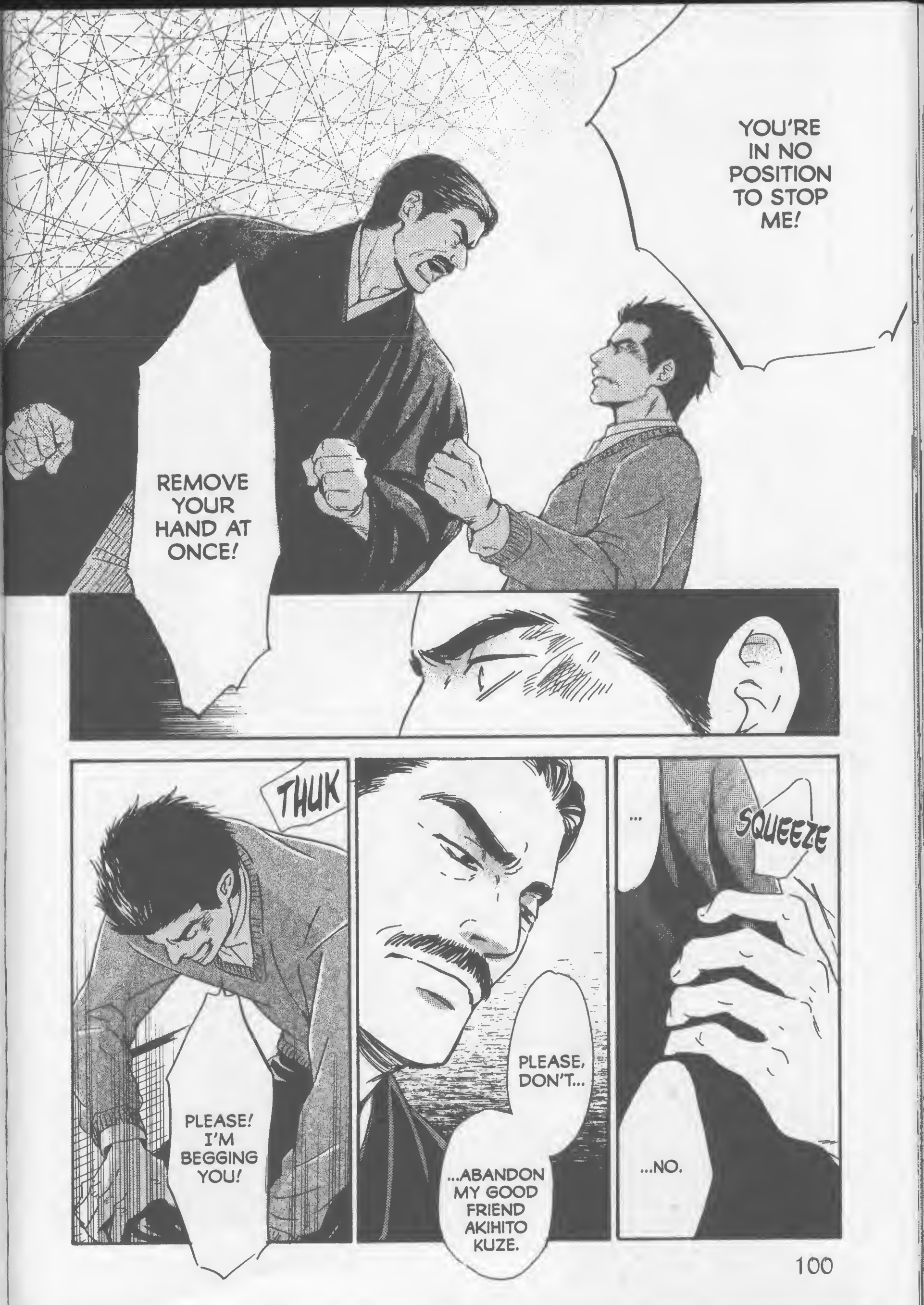


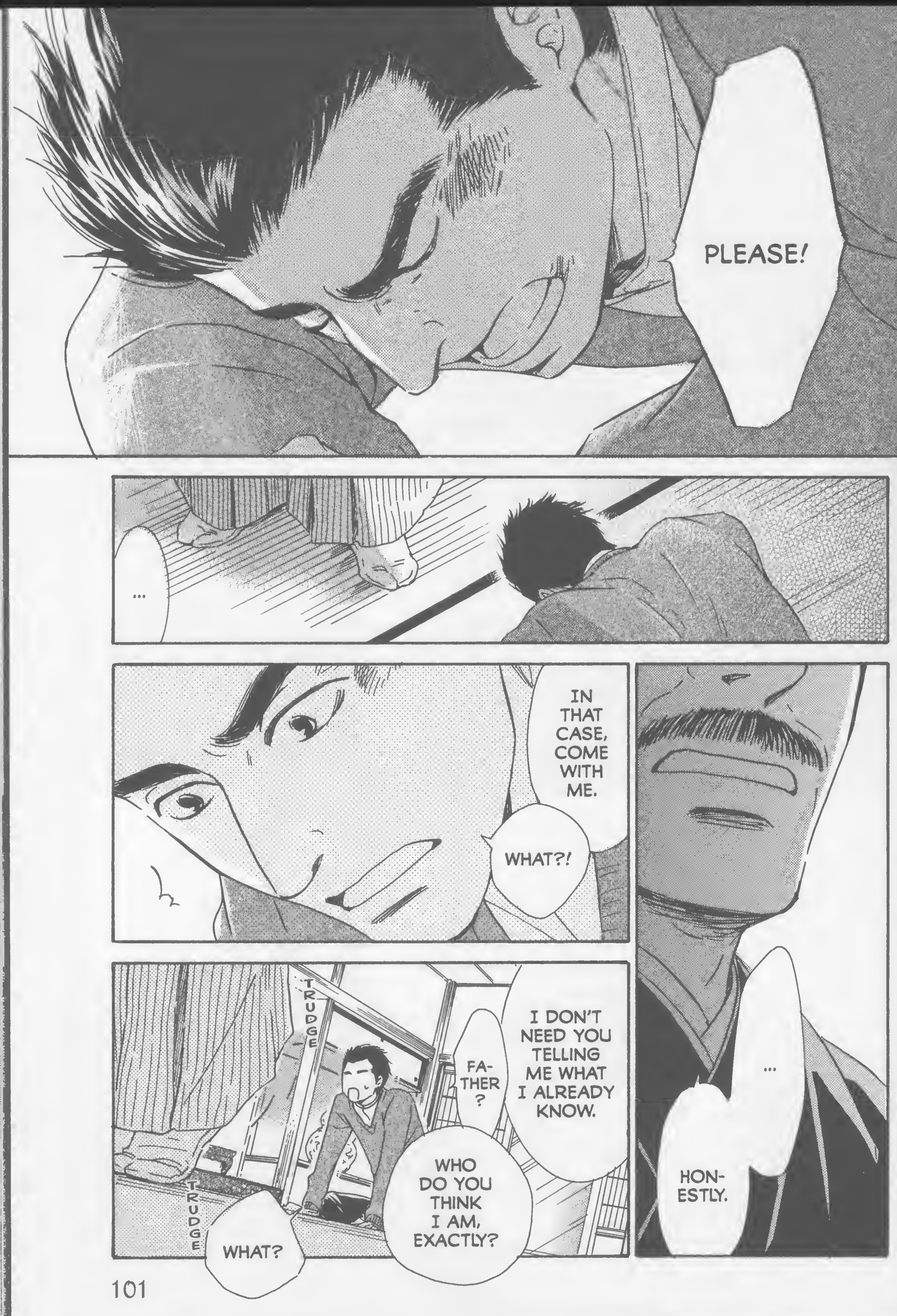

PLEASE EXCUSE THE INTRUSION.
KLATTER
SHF
...
SOICHIRO?
WHAT IS IT?
...
I HAVE A FAVOR TO ASK OF YOU, FATHER.
IF YOU COULD SPARE A MOMENT.

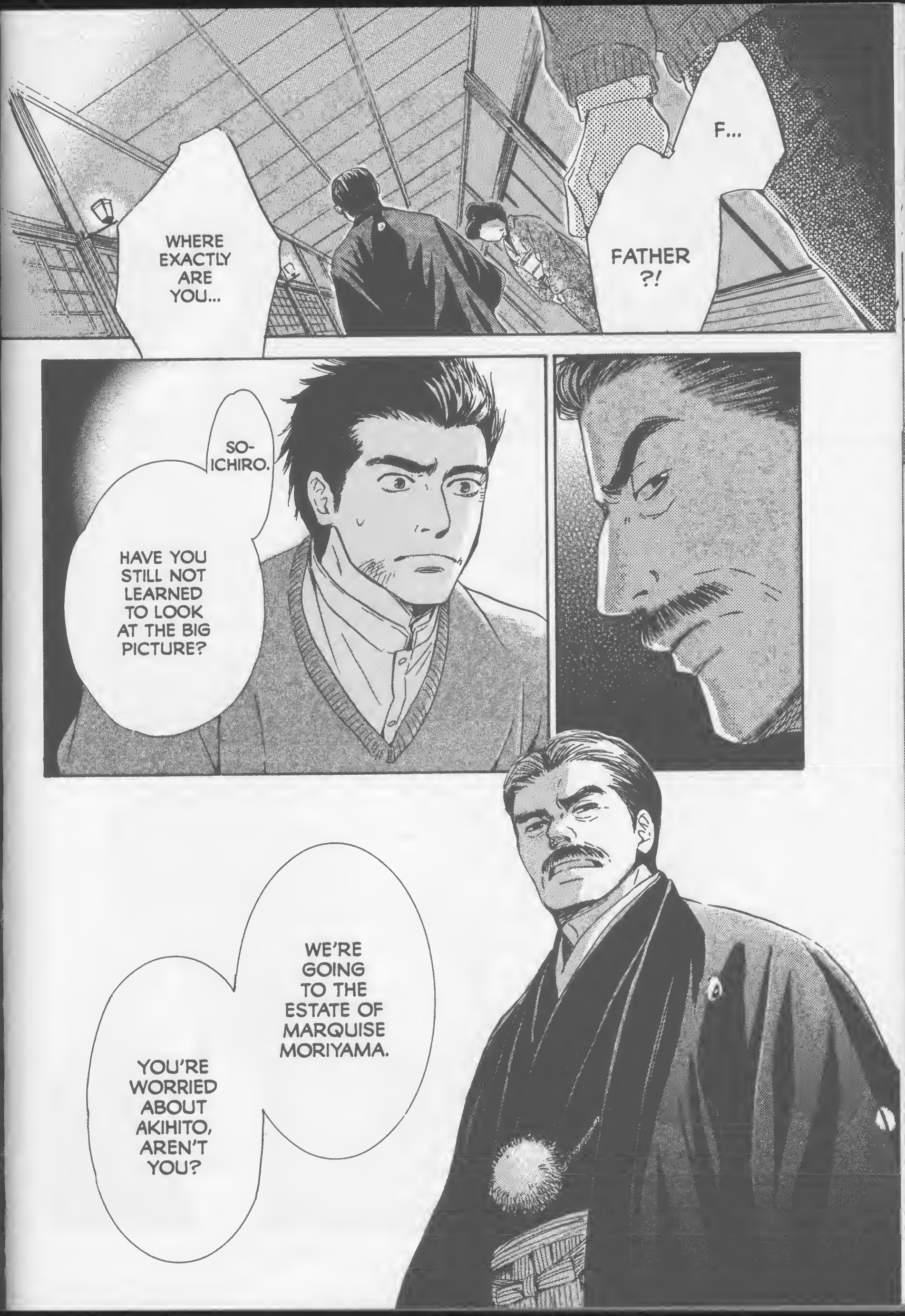

I CAN'T.
CAN'T YOU SEE I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF GETTING READY?
COME TO SEE ME ANOTHER DAY.
THUK
FATHER!
RSTL
RSTL
YOU'RE HARDLY EVER AT THE HOUSE THESE DAYS.
I CAN'T ALLOW THIS CHANCE TO SLIP AWAY.
I TOLD YOU I'M GOING OUT. WERE YOU NOT LISTENING?
I NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THE KUZE HOUSE!

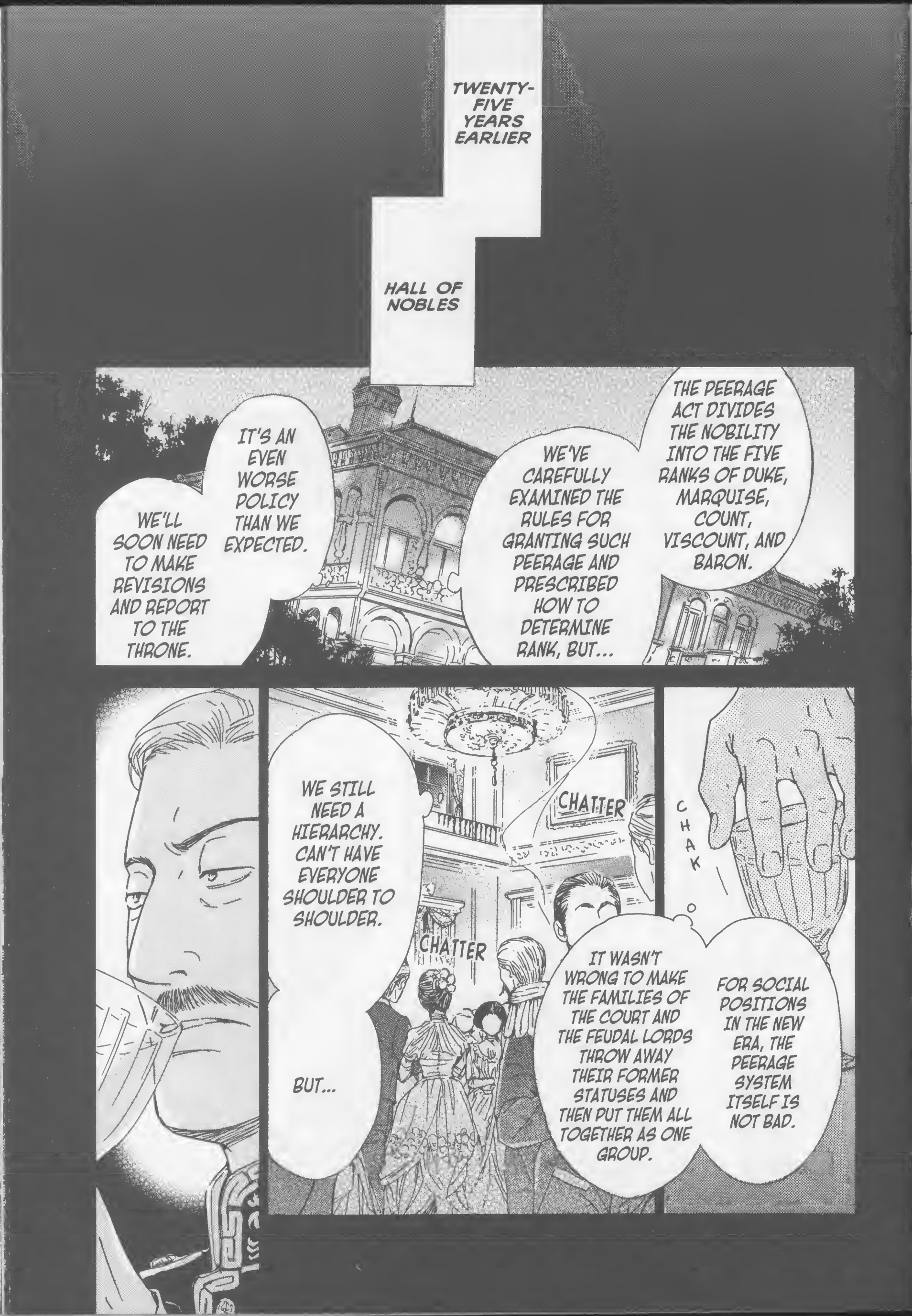

UNTIL NOW...
...I HAVE NEVER ONCE GONE AGAINST YOU, FATHER, OR ASKED YOU FOR ANYTHING.
BECAUSE I KNEW IT WAS POINTLESS!
BUT THIS TIME, I WILL NOT YIELD UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES!
WILL YOU SHUT UP?
THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU.
IF YOU ARE SPEAKING AS A *FRIEND* TO VISCOUNT KUZE...
...THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY. AFTER THIS, AKIHITO WILL NO LONGER BE THE HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
AND KATSURAGI IS ALREADY A MEMBER OF THIS HOUSEHOLD. DON'T GET INVOLVED IN THEIR SQUABBLES.
TRUDGE
TRUDGE
FATHER!

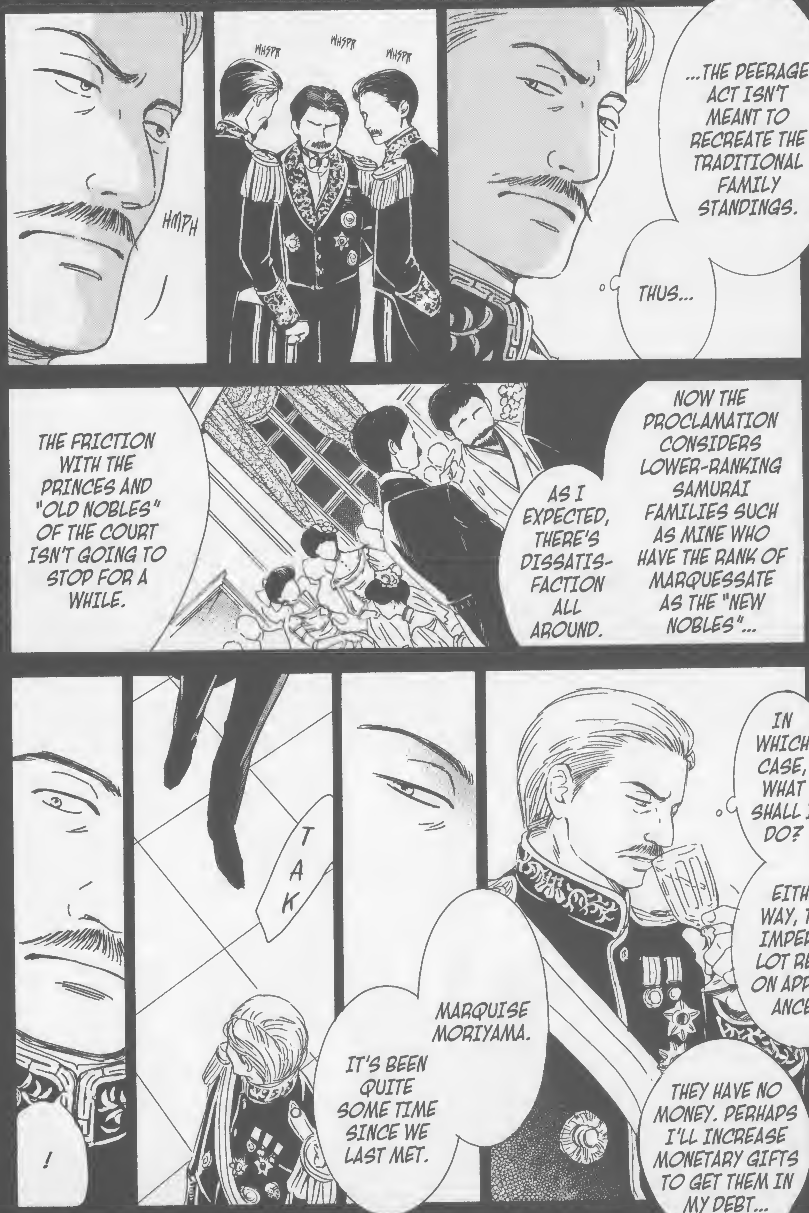

DO YOU REALLY THINK IT'S BEST LIKE THIS?
YOU SAID THAT YOU PUT ME IN THAT ACADEMY FILLED WITH NOBILITY SO THAT I COULD BECOME CLOSE WITH AKIHITO KUZE, DIDN'T YOU?!
THAT WE OWED A DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO THE KUZE HOUSE?!
...
ALL THE BAGS ARE READY? AND THE CARRIAGE?
YES, EVERYTHING IS READY, SIR.
HAVE THE CLERKS GATHER AT THE OFFICE. WHEN I RETURN-
PLEASE, WAIT!
JUST LISTEN TO ME-
GRAB
SOICHIRO!

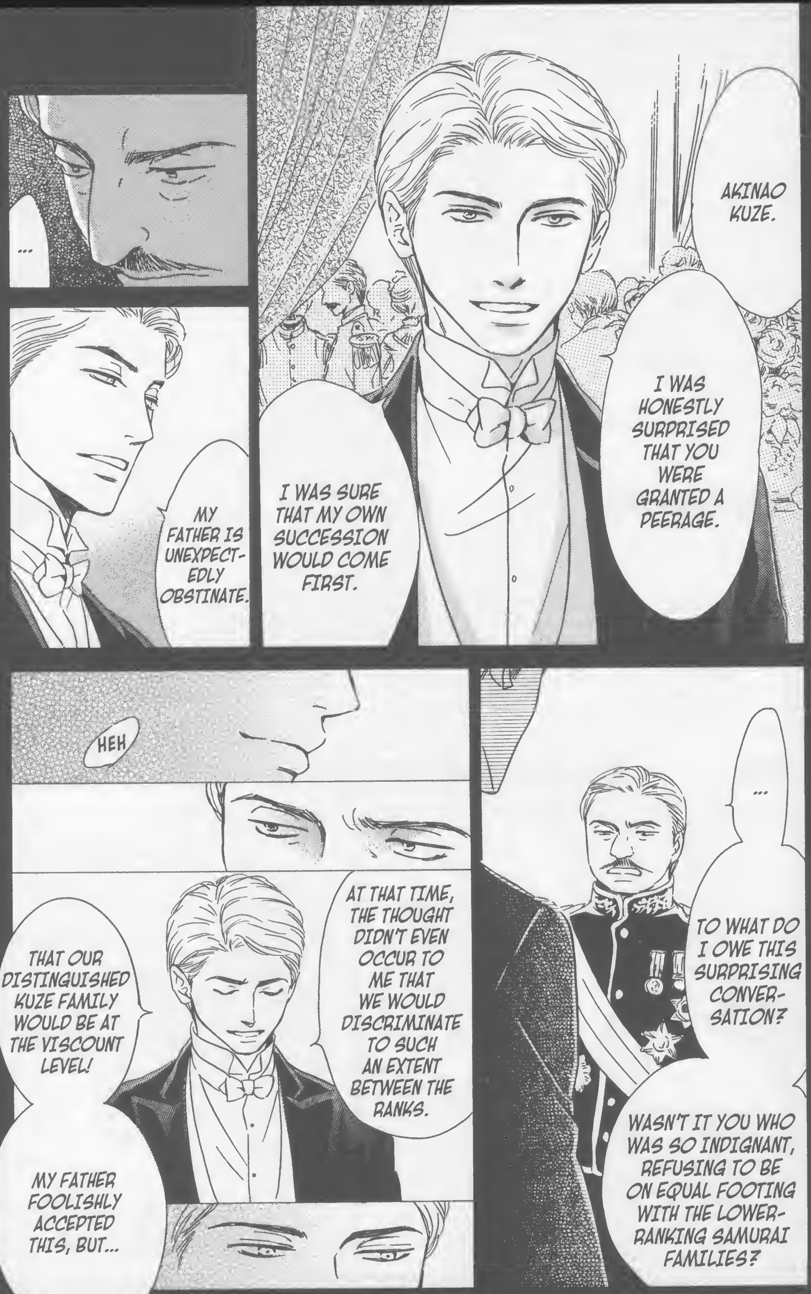

YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO STOP ME!
REMOVE YOUR HAND AT ONCE!
SQUEEZE
...
...NO.
PLEASE, DON'T...
...ABANDON MY GOOD FRIEND AKIHITO KUZE.
THUK
PLEASE! I'M BEGGING YOU!

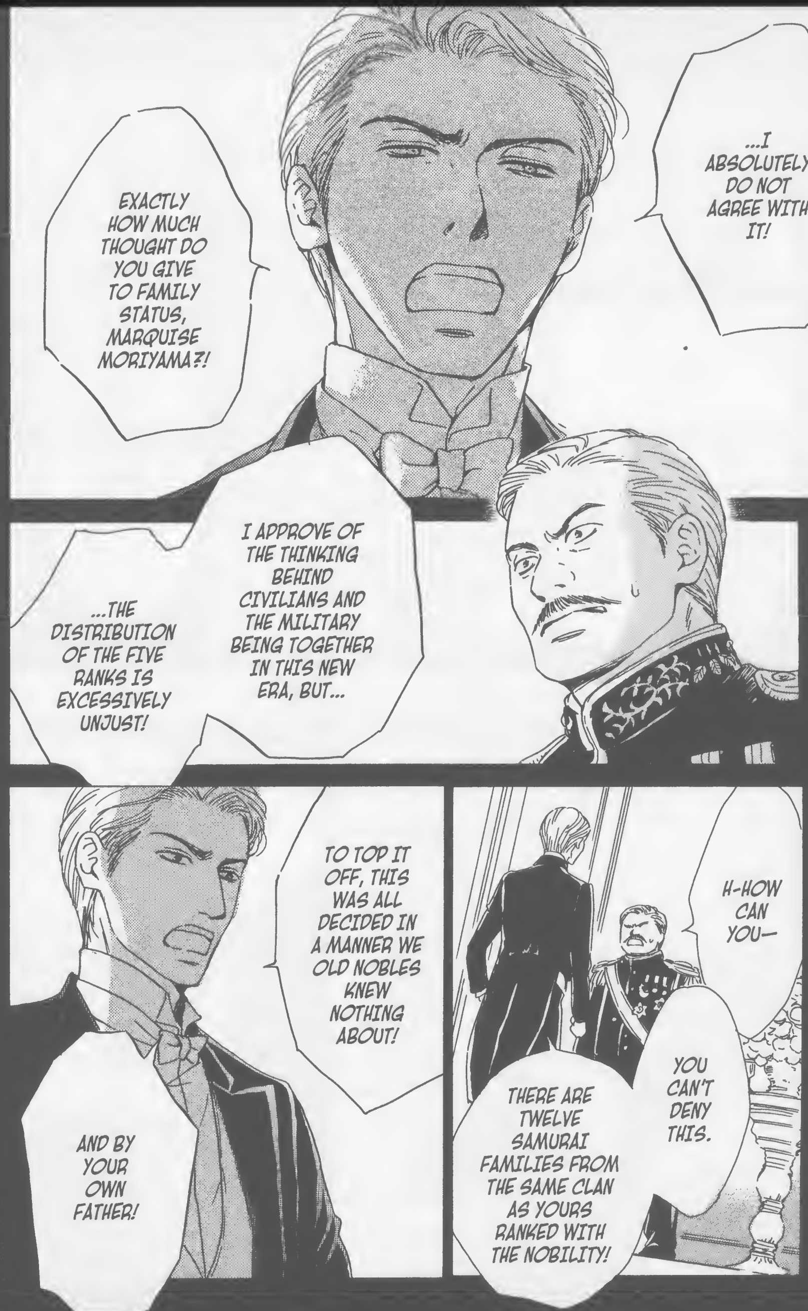

PLEASE!
...
IN THAT CASE, COME WITH ME.
WHAT?!
...
HONESTLY.
I DON'T NEED YOU TELLING ME WHAT I ALREADY KNOW.
WHO DO YOU THINK I AM, EXACTLY?
FATHER?
TRUDGE
TRUDGE
WHAT?

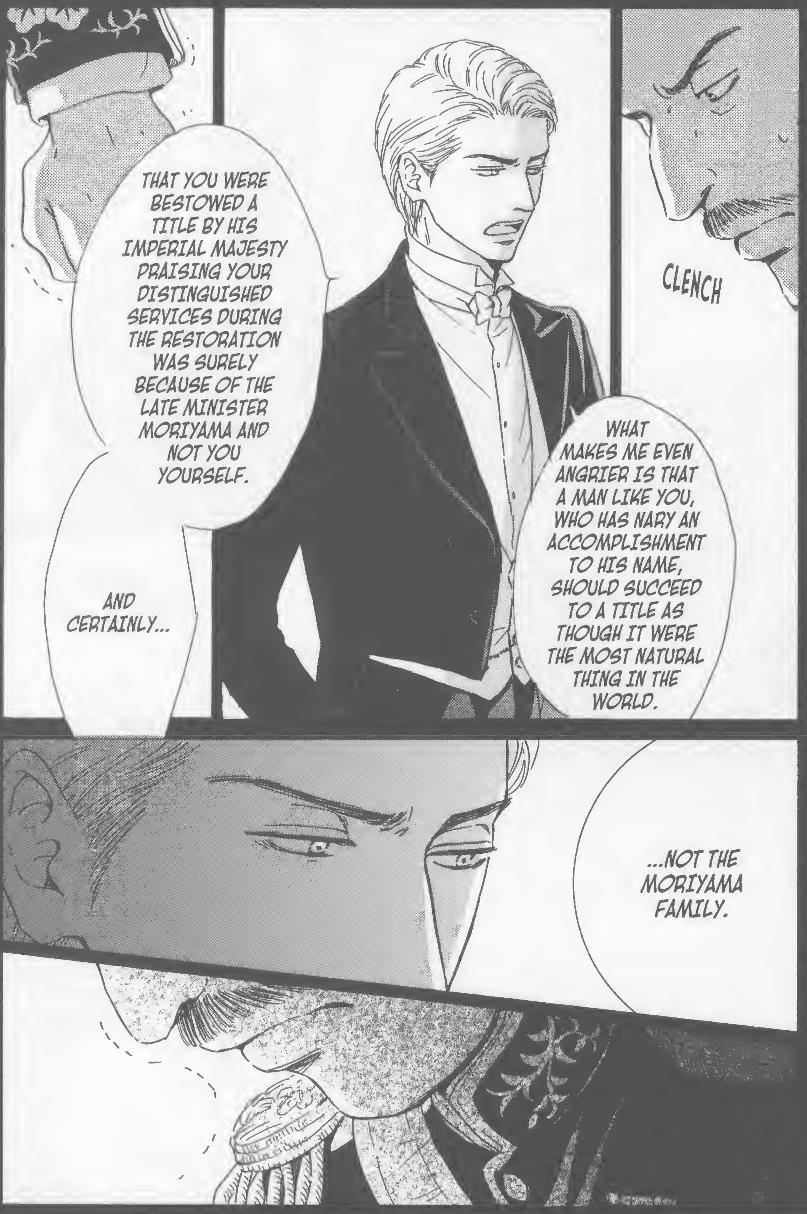

F...
FATHER?!
WHERE EXACTLY ARE YOU...
SO-ICHIRO.
HAVE YOU STILL NOT LEARNED TO LOOK AT THE BIG PICTURE?
WE'RE GOING TO THE ESTATE OF MARQUISE MORIYAMA.
YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT AKIHITO, AREN'T YOU?

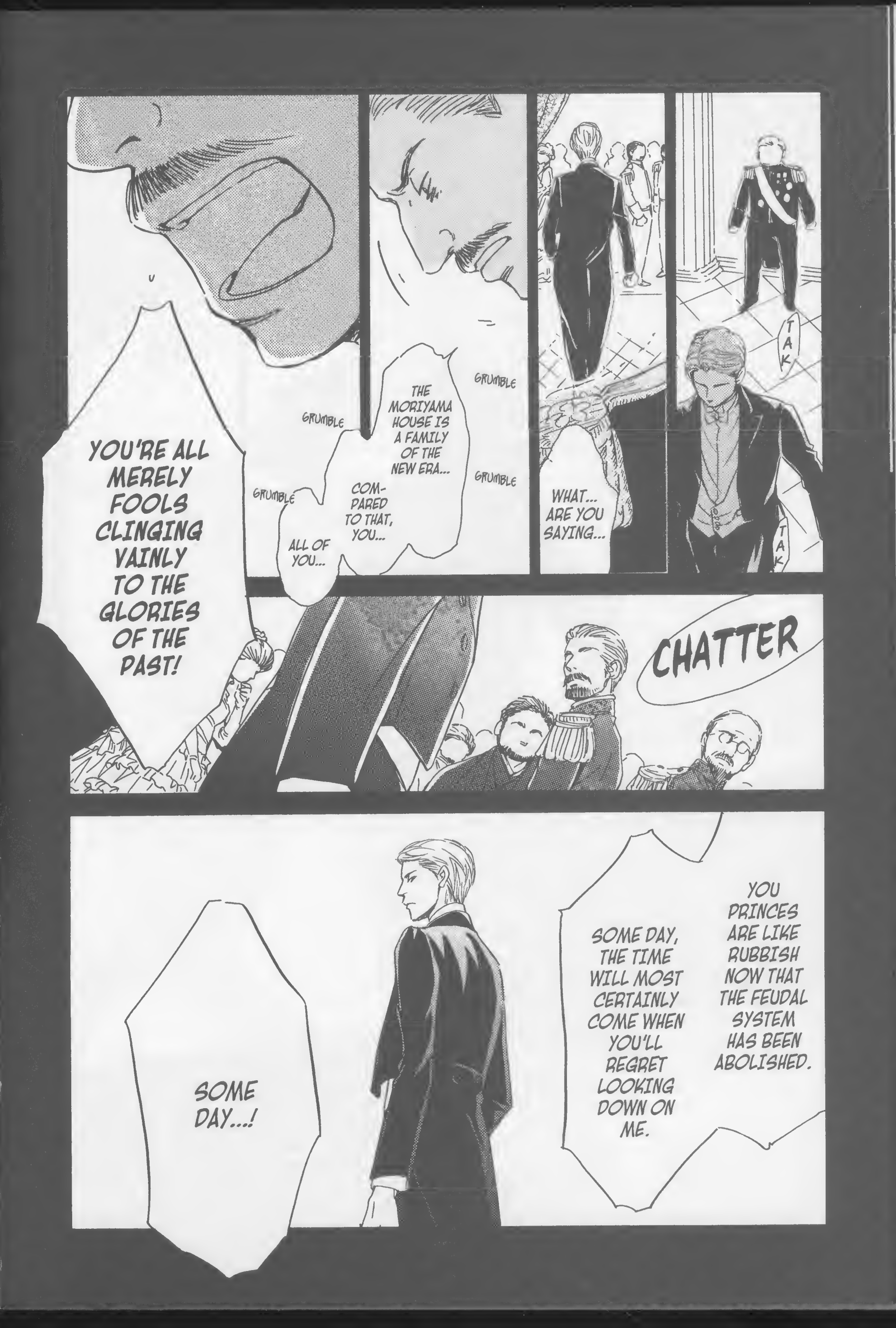

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS EARLIER
HALL OF NOBLES
THE PEERAGE ACT DIVIDES THE NOBILITY INTO THE FIVE RANKS OF DUKE, MARQUISE, COUNT, VISCOUNT, AND BARON.
WE'VE CAREFULLY EXAMINED THE RULES FOR GRANTING SUCH PEERAGE AND PRESCRIBED HOW TO DETERMINE RANK, BUT...
IT'S AN EVEN WORSE POLICY THAN WE EXPECTED.
WE'LL SOON NEED TO MAKE REVISIONS AND REPORT TO THE THRONE.
CHAK
FOR SOCIAL POSITIONS IN THE NEW ERA, THE PEERAGE SYSTEM ITSELF IS NOT BAD.
IT WASN'T WRONG TO MAKE THE FAMILIES OF THE COURT AND THE FEUDAL LORDS THROW AWAY THEIR FORMER STATUSES AND THEN PUT THEM ALL TOGETHER AS ONE GROUP.
CHATTER
CHATTER
WE STILL NEED A HIERARCHY. CAN'T HAVE EVERYONE SHOULDER TO SHOULDER.
BUT...

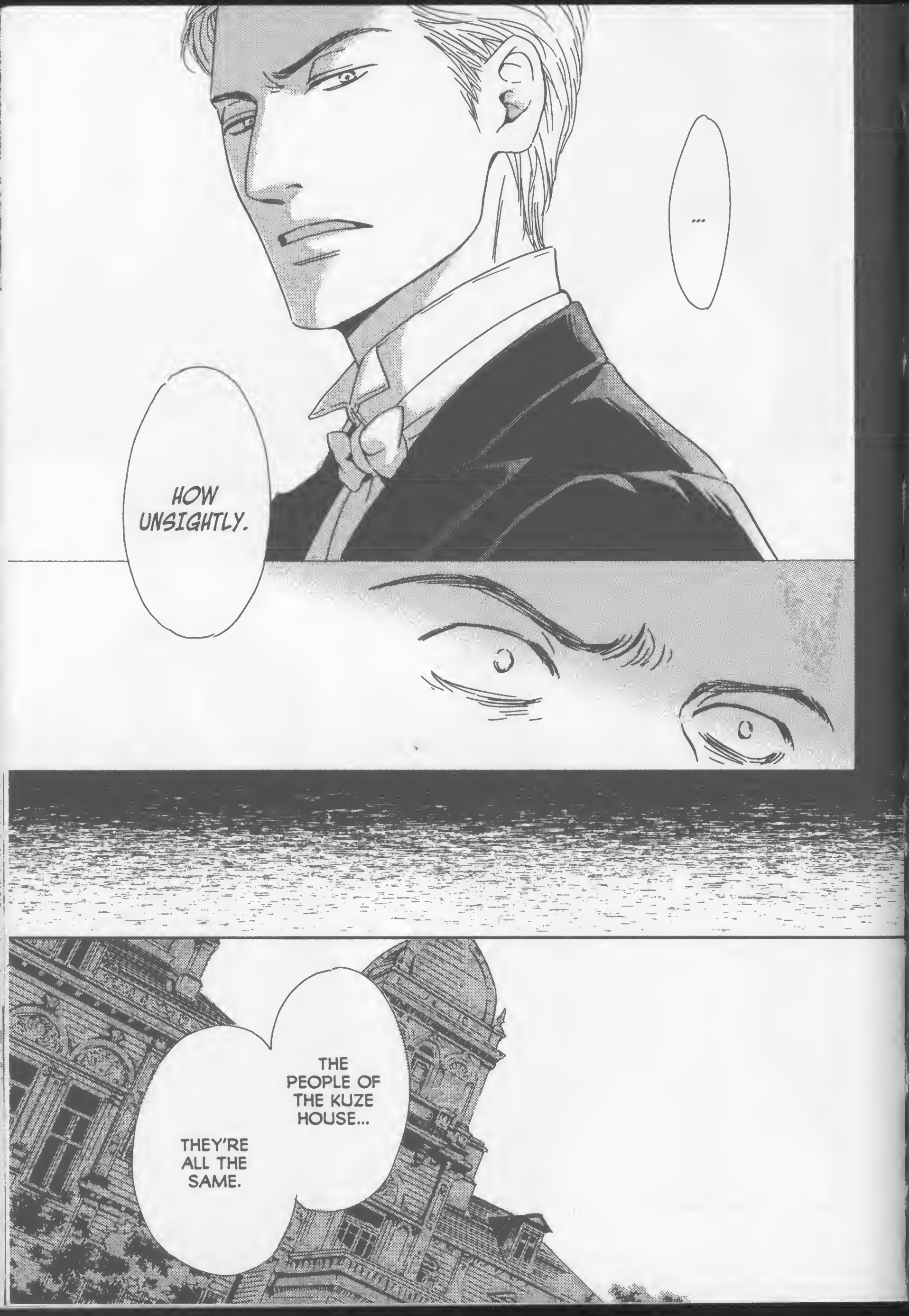

...THE PEERAGE ACT ISN'T MEANT TO RECREATE THE TRADITIONAL FAMILY STANDINGS.
THUS...
WHSPR
WHSPR
WHSPR
HMPH
NOW THE PROCLAMATION CONSIDERS LOWER-RANKING SAMURAI FAMILIES SUCH AS MINE WHO HAVE THE RANK OF MARQUESSATE AS THE "NEW NOBLES"...
AS I EXPECTED, THERE'S DISSATISFACTION ALL AROUND.
THE FRICTION WITH THE PRINCES AND "OLD NOBLES" OF THE COURT ISN'T GOING TO STOP FOR A WHILE.
IN WHICH CASE, WHAT SHALL I DO?
EITHER WAY, THIS IMPERIAL LOT RESTS ON APPEARANCES.
THEY HAVE NO MONEY. PERHAPS I'LL INCREASE MONETARY GIFTS TO GET THEM IN MY DEBT...
MARQUISE MORIYAMA.
IT'S BEEN QUITE SOME TIME SINCE WE LAST MET.
TAK
!

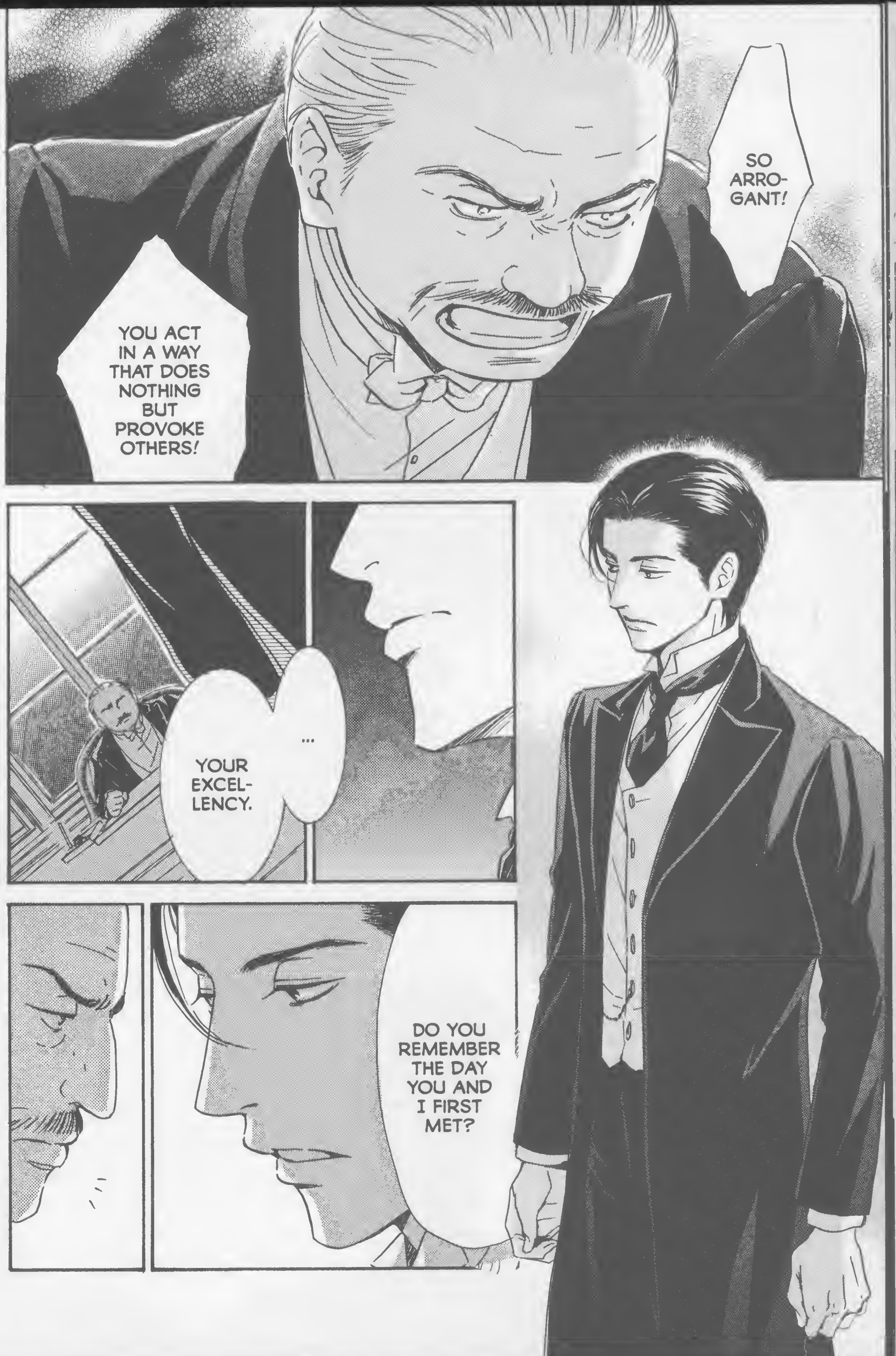

AKINAO KUZE.
I WAS HONESTLY SURPRISED THAT YOU WERE GRANTED A PEERAGE.
I WAS SURE THAT MY OWN SUCCESSION WOULD COME FIRST.
...
MY FATHER IS UNEXPECTEDLY OBSTINATE.
...
TO WHAT DO I OWE THIS SURPRISING CONVERSATION?
WASN'T IT YOU WHO WAS SO INDIGNANT, REFUSING TO BE ON EQUAL FOOTING WITH THE LOWER-RANKING SAMURAI FAMILIES?
HEH
AT THAT TIME, THE THOUGHT DIDN'T EVEN OCCUR TO ME THAT WE WOULD DISCRIMINATE TO SUCH AN EXTENT BETWEEN THE RANKS.
THAT OUR DISTINGUISHED KUZE FAMILY WOULD BE AT THE VISCOUNT LEVEL!
MY FATHER FOOLISHLY ACCEPTED THIS, BUT...

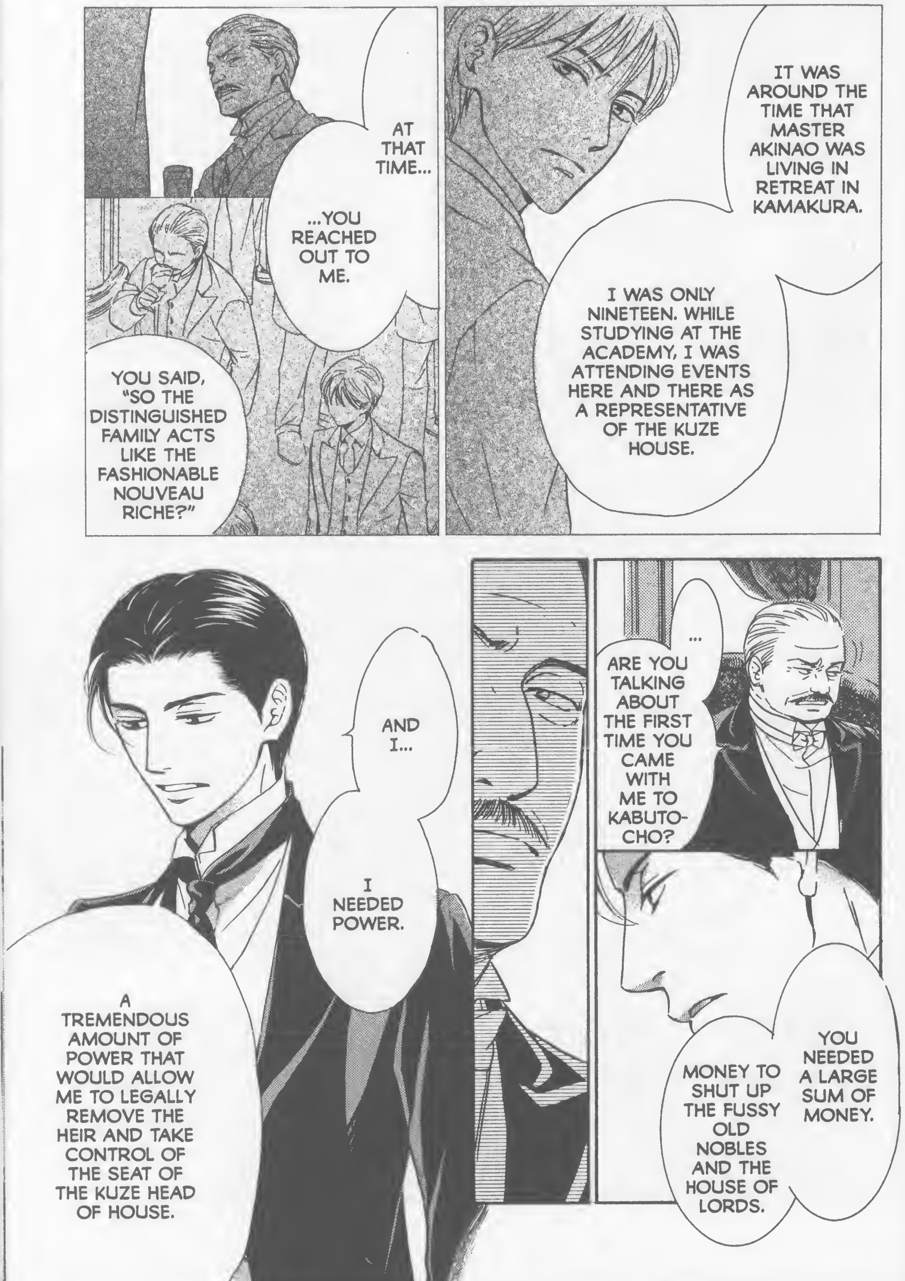

...I ABSOLUTELY DO NOT AGREE WITH IT!
EXACTLY HOW MUCH THOUGHT DO YOU GIVE TO FAMILY STATUS, MARQUISE MORIYAMA?!
I APPROVE OF THE THINKING BEHIND CIVILIANS AND THE MILITARY BEING TOGETHER IN THIS NEW ERA, BUT...
...THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE FIVE RANKS IS EXCESSIVELY UNJUST!
TO TOP IT OFF, THIS WAS ALL DECIDED IN A MANNER WE OLD NOBLES KNEW NOTHING ABOUT!
AND BY YOUR OWN FATHER!
THERE ARE TWELVE SAMURAI FAMILIES FROM THE SAME CLAN AS YOURS RANKED WITH THE NOBILITY!
YOU CAN'T DENY THIS.
H-HOW CAN YOU—

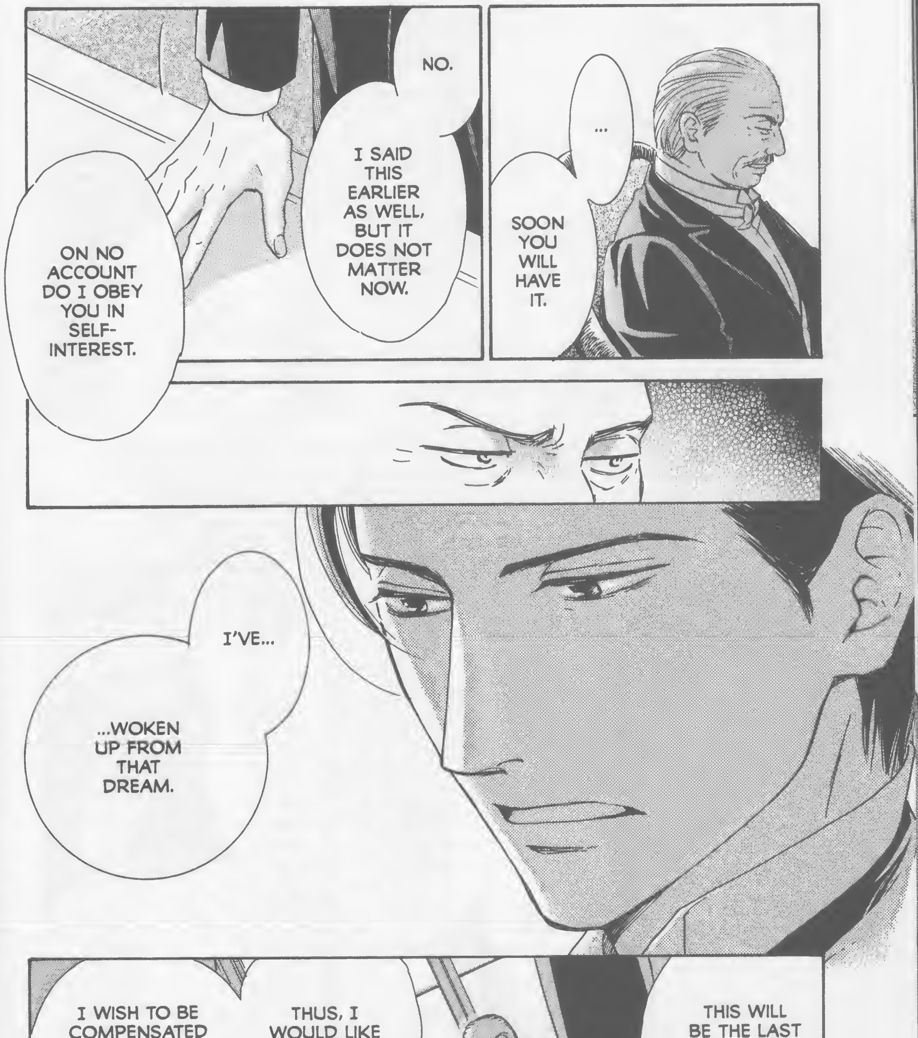

CLENCH
THAT YOU WERE BESTOWED A TITLE BY HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY PRAISING YOUR DISTINGUISHED SERVICES DURING THE RESTORATION WAS SURELY BECAUSE OF THE LATE MINISTER MORIYAMA AND NOT YOU YOURSELF.
WHAT MAKES ME EVEN ANGRIER IS THAT A MAN LIKE YOU, WHO HAS NARY AN ACCOMPLISHMENT TO HIS NAME, SHOULD SUCCEED TO A TITLE AS THOUGH IT WERE THE MOST NATURAL THING IN THE WORLD.
AND CERTAINLY...
...NOT THE MORIYAMA FAMILY.

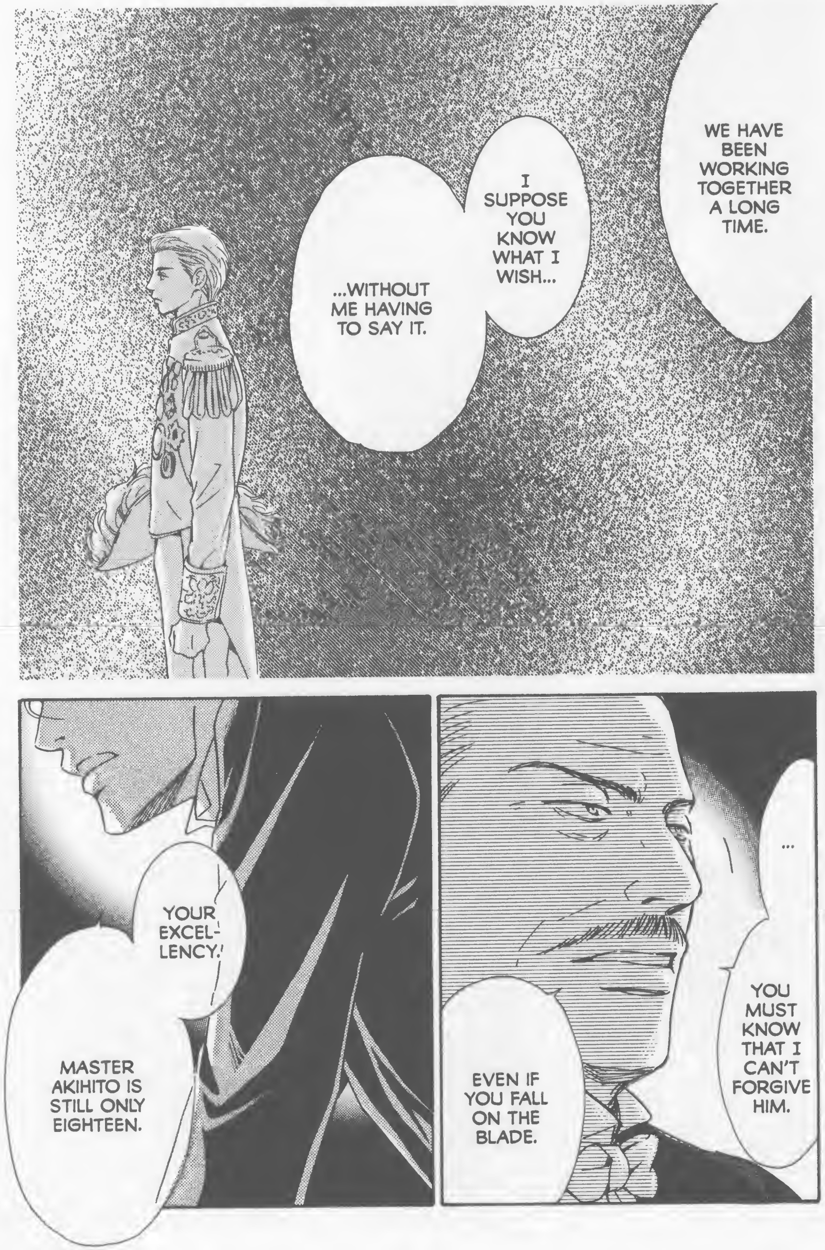

TAK
WHAT... ARE YOU SAYING...
TAK
GRUMBLE
THE MORIYAMA HOUSE IS A FAMILY OF THE NEW ERA...
GRUMBLE
COMPARED TO THAT, YOU...
ALL OF YOU...
GRUMBLE
YOU'RE ALL MERELY FOOLS CLINGING VAINLY TO THE GLORIES OF THE PAST!
CHATTER
YOU PRINCES ARE LIKE RUBBISH NOW THAT THE FEUDAL SYSTEM HAS BEEN ABOLISHED.
SOME DAY, THE TIME WILL MOST CERTAINLY COME WHEN YOU'LL REGRET LOOKING DOWN ON ME.
SOME DAY...!

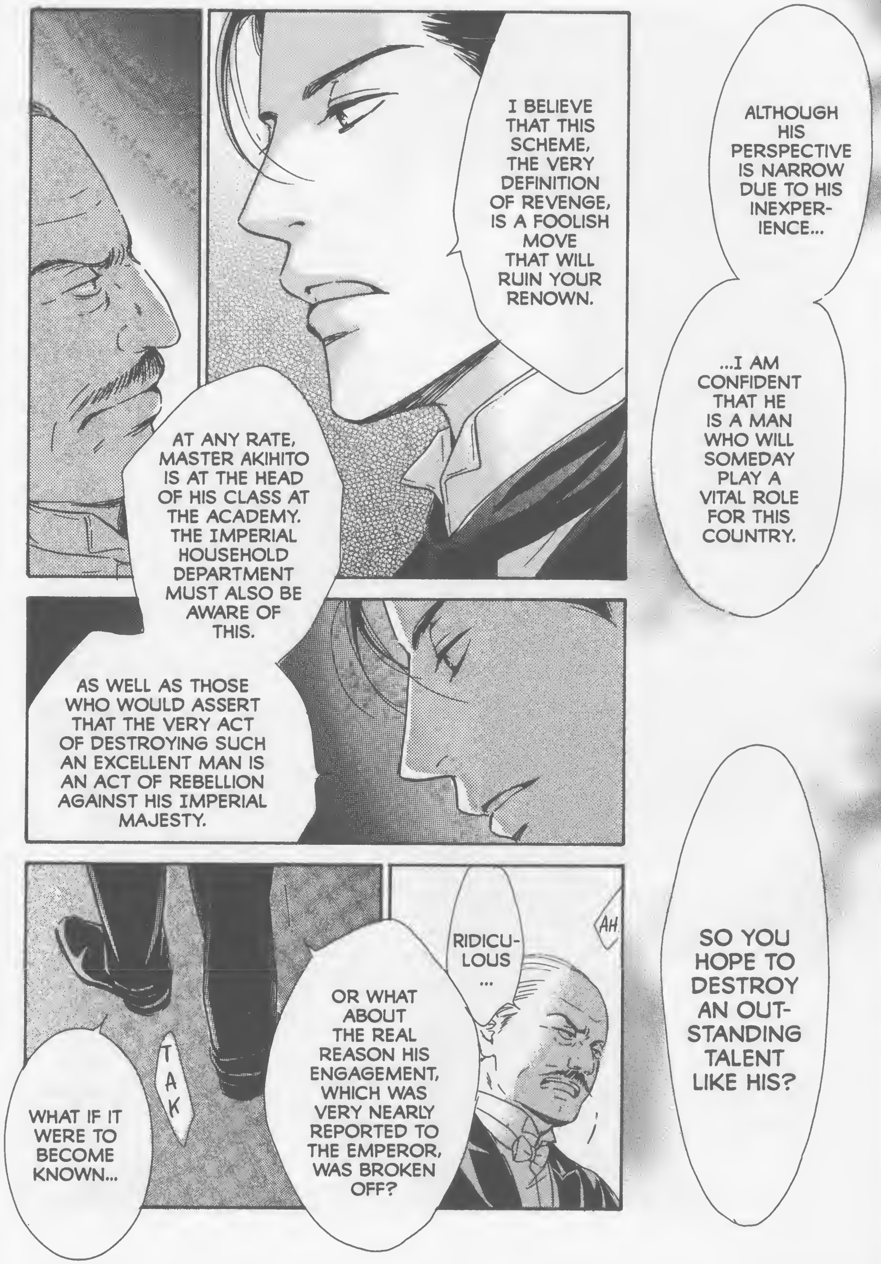

...
HOW UNSIGHTLY.
THE PEOPLE OF THE KUZE HOUSE...
THEY'RE ALL THE SAME.

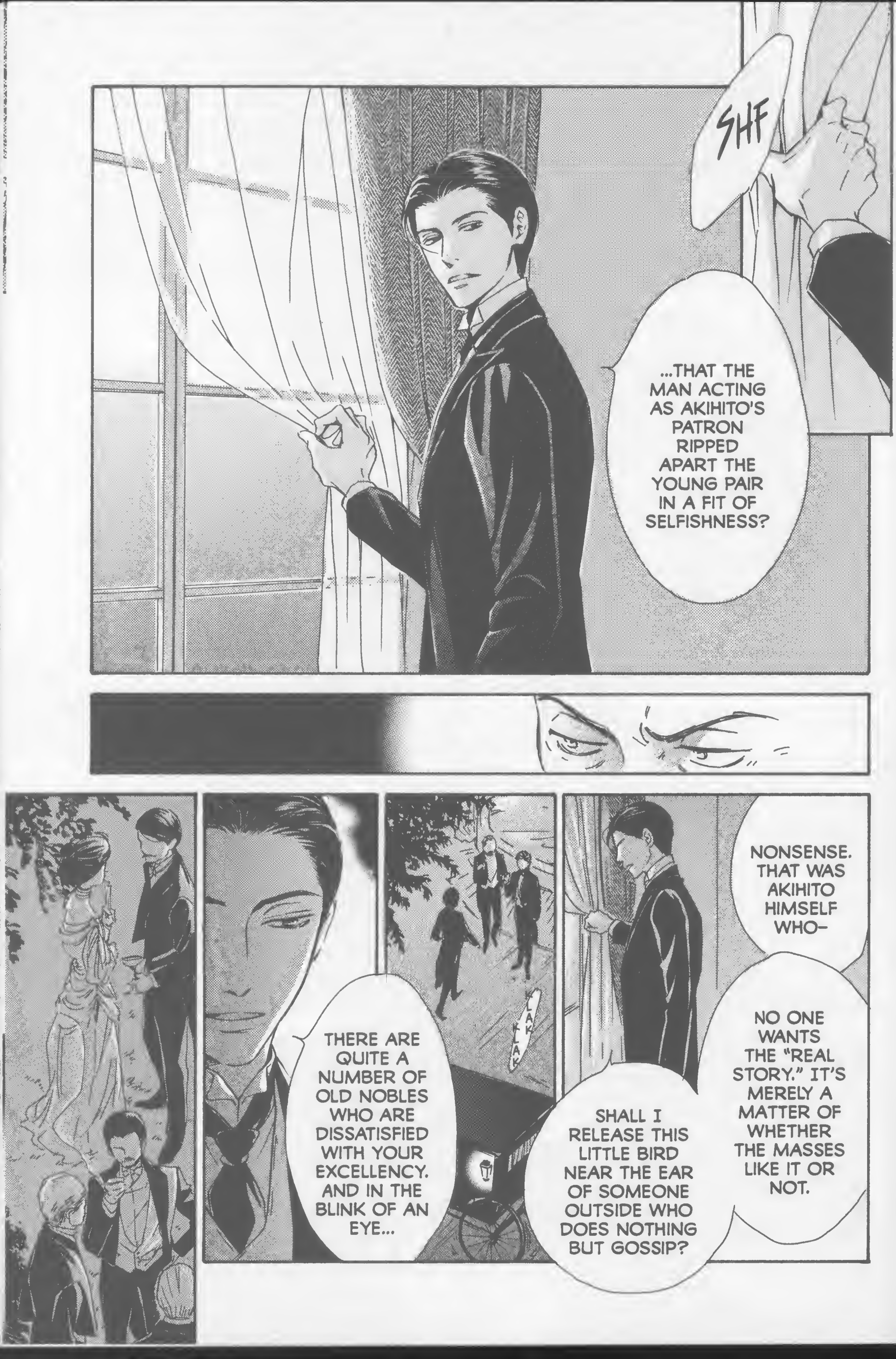

SO ARROGANT!
YOU ACT IN A WAY THAT DOES NOTHING BUT PROVOKE OTHERS!
...
YOUR EXCELLENCY.
DO YOU REMEMBER THE DAY YOU AND I FIRST MET?

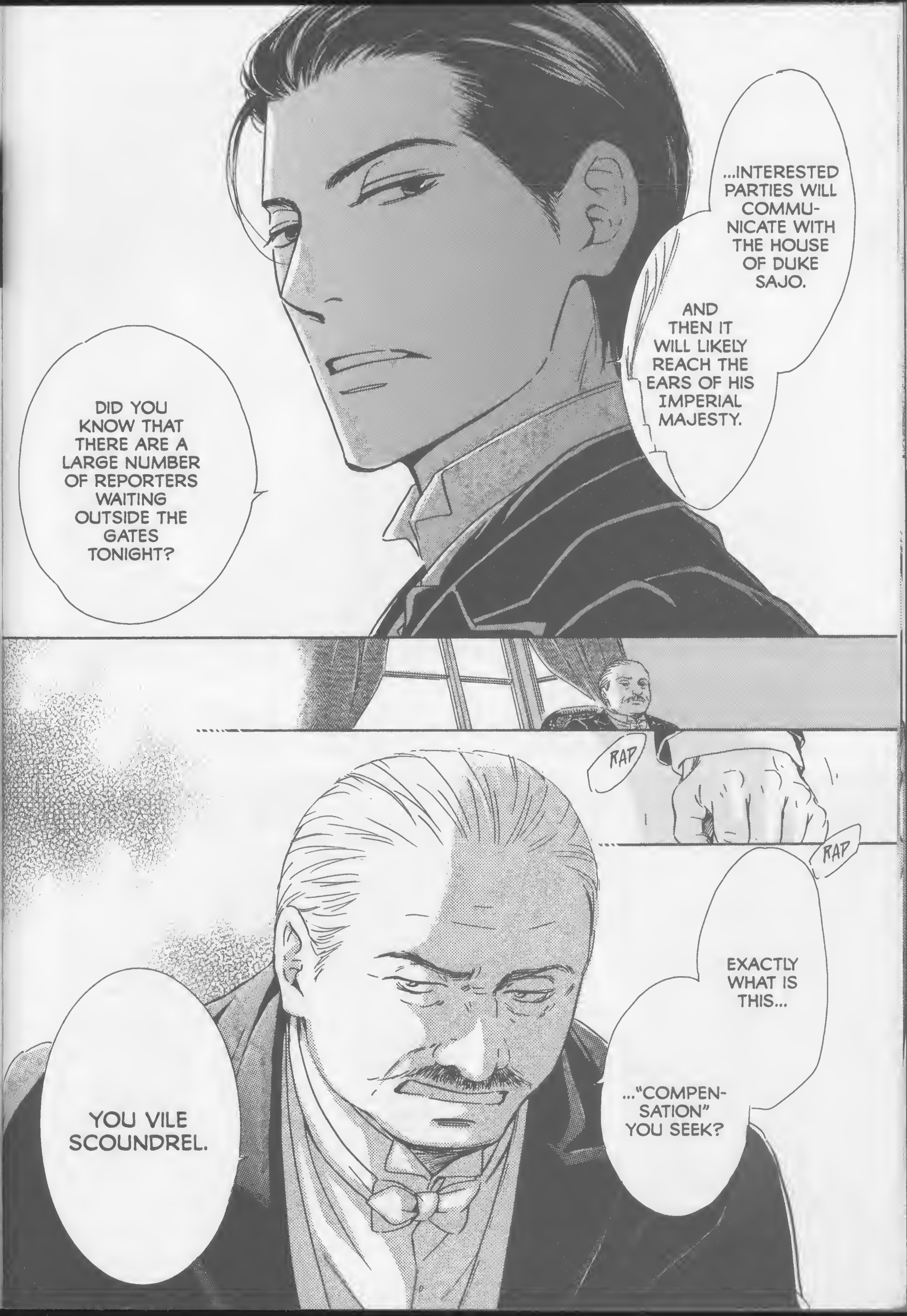

IT WAS AROUND THE TIME THAT MASTER AKINAO WAS LIVING IN RETREAT IN KAMAKURA.
I WAS ONLY NINETEEN. WHILE STUDYING AT THE ACADEMY, I WAS ATTENDING EVENTS HERE AND THERE AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
AT THAT TIME...
...YOU REACHED OUT TO ME.
YOU SAID, "SO THE DISTINGUISHED FAMILY ACTS LIKE THE FASHIONABLE NOUVEAU RICHE?"
...
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT THE FIRST TIME YOU CAME WITH ME TO KABUTO-CHO?
YOU NEEDED A LARGE SUM OF MONEY.
MONEY TO SHUT UP THE FUSSY OLD NOBLES AND THE HOUSE OF LORDS.
AND I...
I NEEDED POWER.
A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF POWER THAT WOULD ALLOW ME TO LEGALLY REMOVE THE HEIR AND TAKE CONTROL OF THE SEAT OF THE KUZE HEAD OF HOUSE.

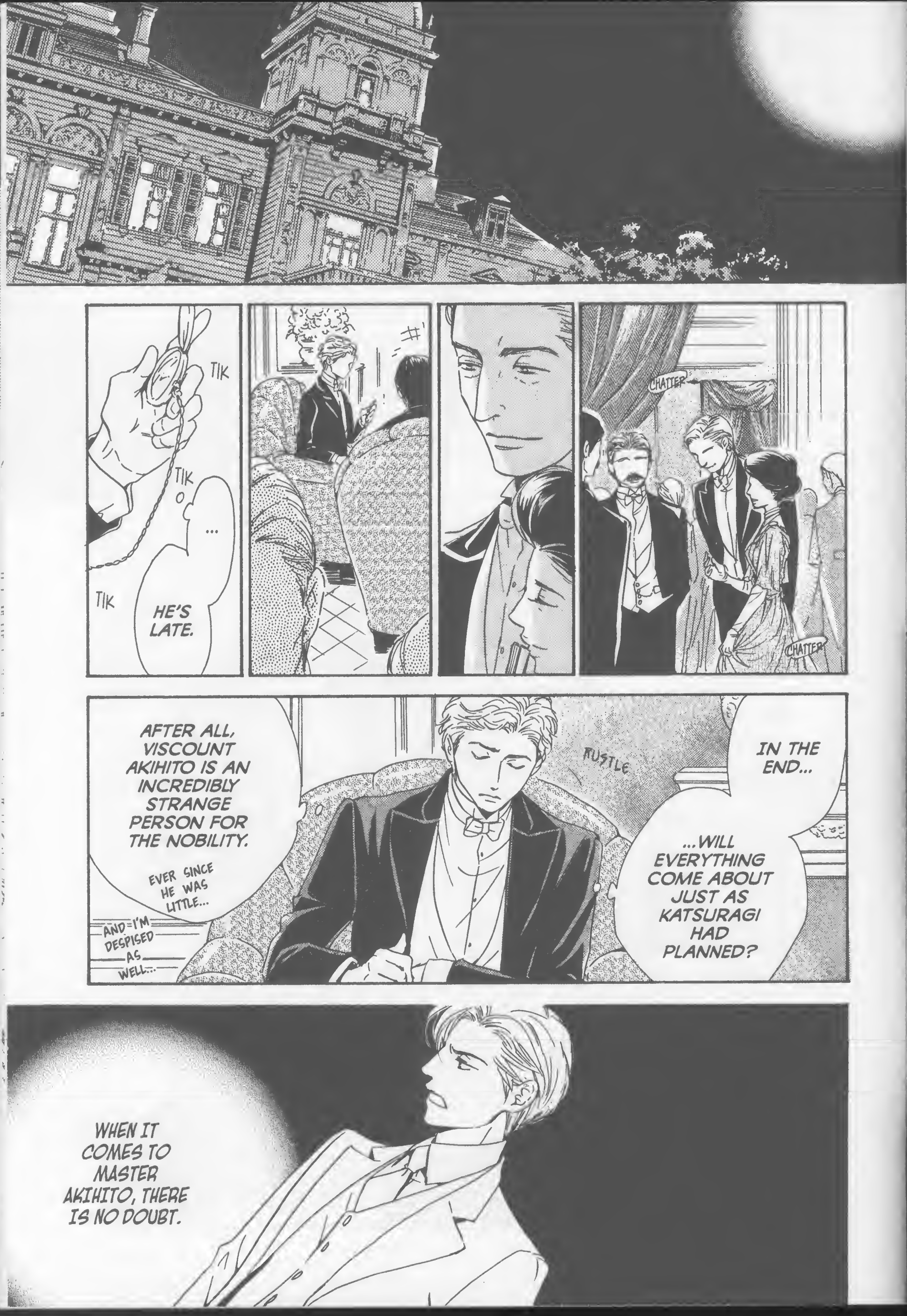

...
SOON YOU WILL HAVE IT.
NO.
I SAID THIS EARLIER AS WELL, BUT IT DOES NOT MATTER NOW.
ON NO ACCOUNT DO I OBEY YOU IN SELF-INTEREST.
I'VE...
...WOKEN UP FROM THAT DREAM.
THIS WILL BE THE LAST TIME I TALK TO YOU PERSONALLY, YOUR EXCELLENCY.
THUS, I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE AN ACCOUNTING DONE THIS EVENING.
I WISH TO BE COMPENSATED FOR ALL THE EFFORTS I HAVE EXPENDED UNTIL NOW ON THE BEHALF OF YOUR EXCELLENCY.

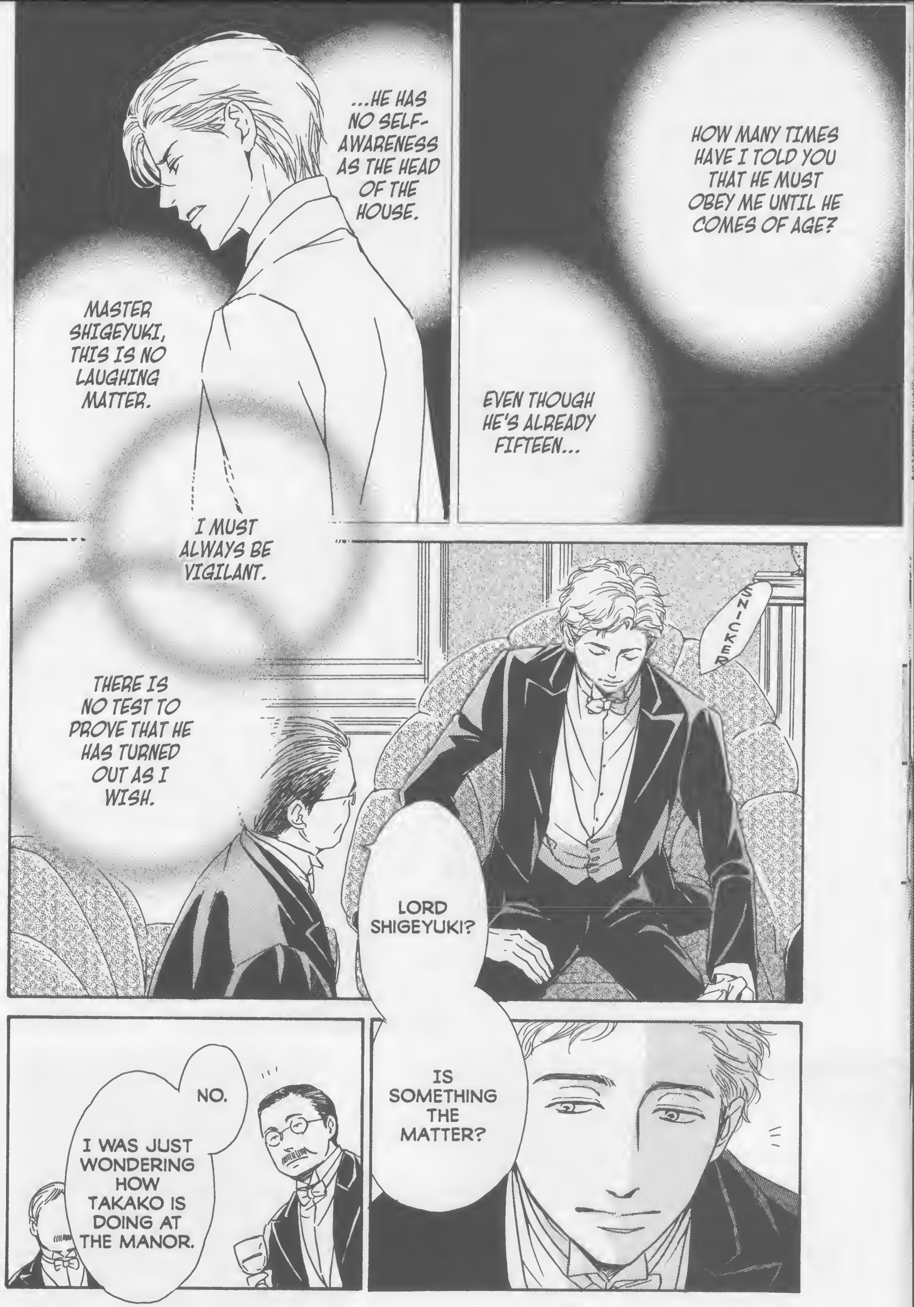

WE HAVE BEEN WORKING TOGETHER A LONG TIME.
I SUPPOSE YOU KNOW WHAT I WISH...
...WITHOUT ME HAVING TO SAY IT.
...
YOU MUST KNOW THAT I CAN'T FORGIVE HIM.
EVEN IF YOU FALL ON THE BLADE.
YOUR EXCELLENCY!
MASTER AKIHITO IS STILL ONLY EIGHTEEN.

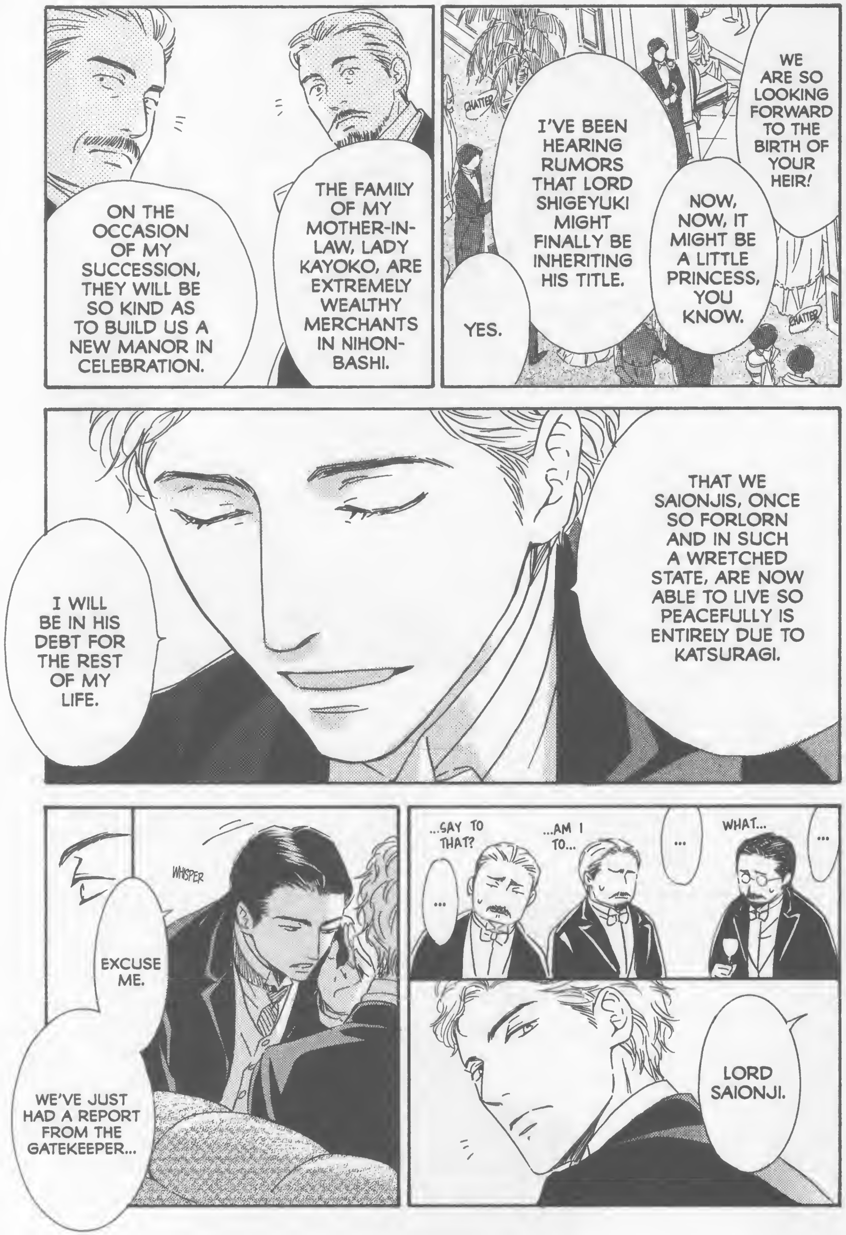

ALTHOUGH HIS PERSPECTIVE IS NARROW DUE TO HIS INEXPERIENCE...
...I AM CONFIDENT THAT HE IS A MAN WHO WILL SOMEDAY PLAY A VITAL ROLE FOR THIS COUNTRY.
I BELIEVE THAT THIS SCHEME, THE VERY DEFINITION OF REVENGE, IS A FOOLISH MOVE THAT WILL RUIN YOUR RENOWN.
AT ANY RATE, MASTER AKIHITO IS AT THE HEAD OF HIS CLASS AT THE ACADEMY. THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT MUST ALSO BE AWARE OF THIS.
AS WELL AS THOSE WHO WOULD ASSERT THAT THE VERY ACT OF DESTROYING SUCH AN EXCELLENT MAN IS AN ACT OF REBELLION AGAINST HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY.
SO YOU HOPE TO DESTROY AN OUTSTANDING TALENT LIKE HIS?
AH
RIDICULOUS...
OR WHAT ABOUT THE REAL REASON HIS ENGAGEMENT, WHICH WAS VERY NEARLY REPORTED TO THE EMPEROR, WAS BROKEN OFF?
TAK
WHAT IF IT WERE TO BECOME KNOWN...

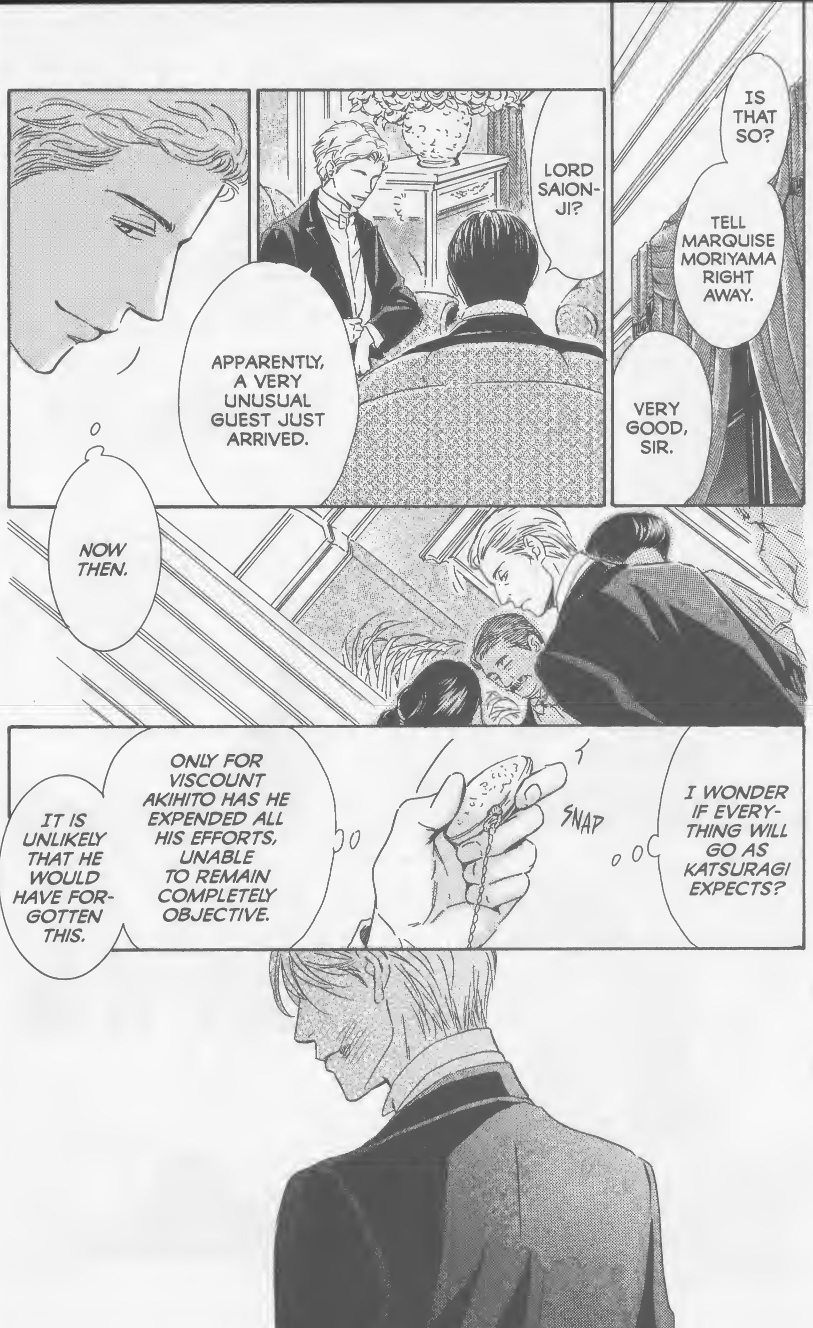

SHF
...THAT THE MAN ACTING AS AKIHITO'S PATRON RIPPED APART THE YOUNG PAIR IN A FIT OF SELFISHNESS?
NONSENSE. THAT WAS AKIHITO HIMSELF WHO–
NO ONE WANTS THE "REAL STORY." IT'S MERELY A MATTER OF WHETHER THE MASSES LIKE IT OR NOT.
SHALL I RELEASE THIS LITTLE BIRD NEAR THE EAR OF SOMEONE OUTSIDE WHO DOES NOTHING BUT GOSSIP?
KLAK KLAK
THERE ARE QUITE A NUMBER OF OLD NOBLES WHO ARE DISSATISFIED WITH YOUR EXCELLENCY. AND IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE...

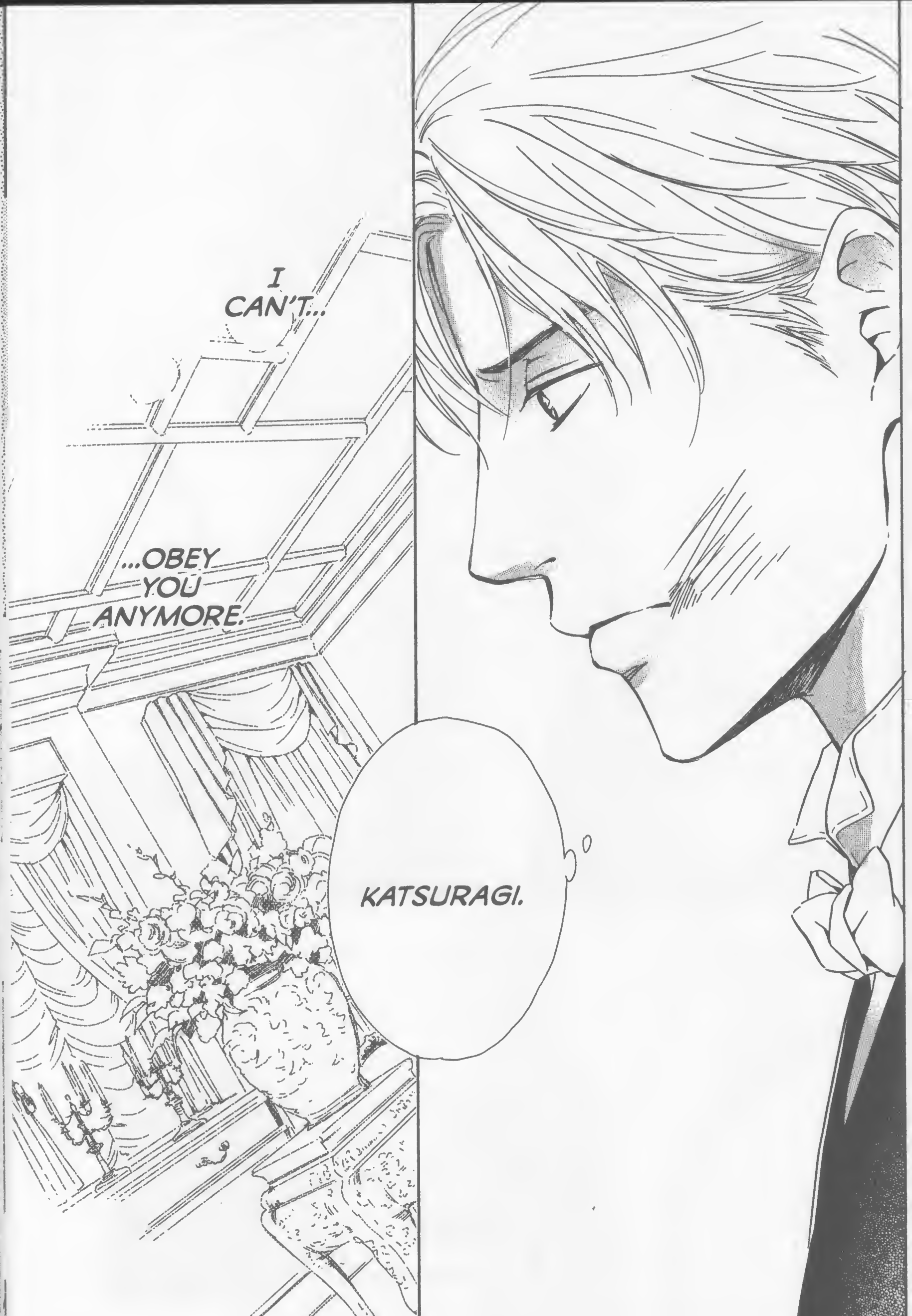

...INTERESTED PARTIES WILL COMMUNICATE WITH THE HOUSE OF DUKE SAJO.
AND THEN IT WILL LIKELY REACH THE EARS OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY.
DID YOU KNOW THAT THERE ARE A LARGE NUMBER OF REPORTERS WAITING OUTSIDE THE GATES TONIGHT?
RAP
RAP
EXACTLY WHAT IS THIS...
..."COMPENSATION" YOU SEEK?
YOU VILE SCOUNDREL.

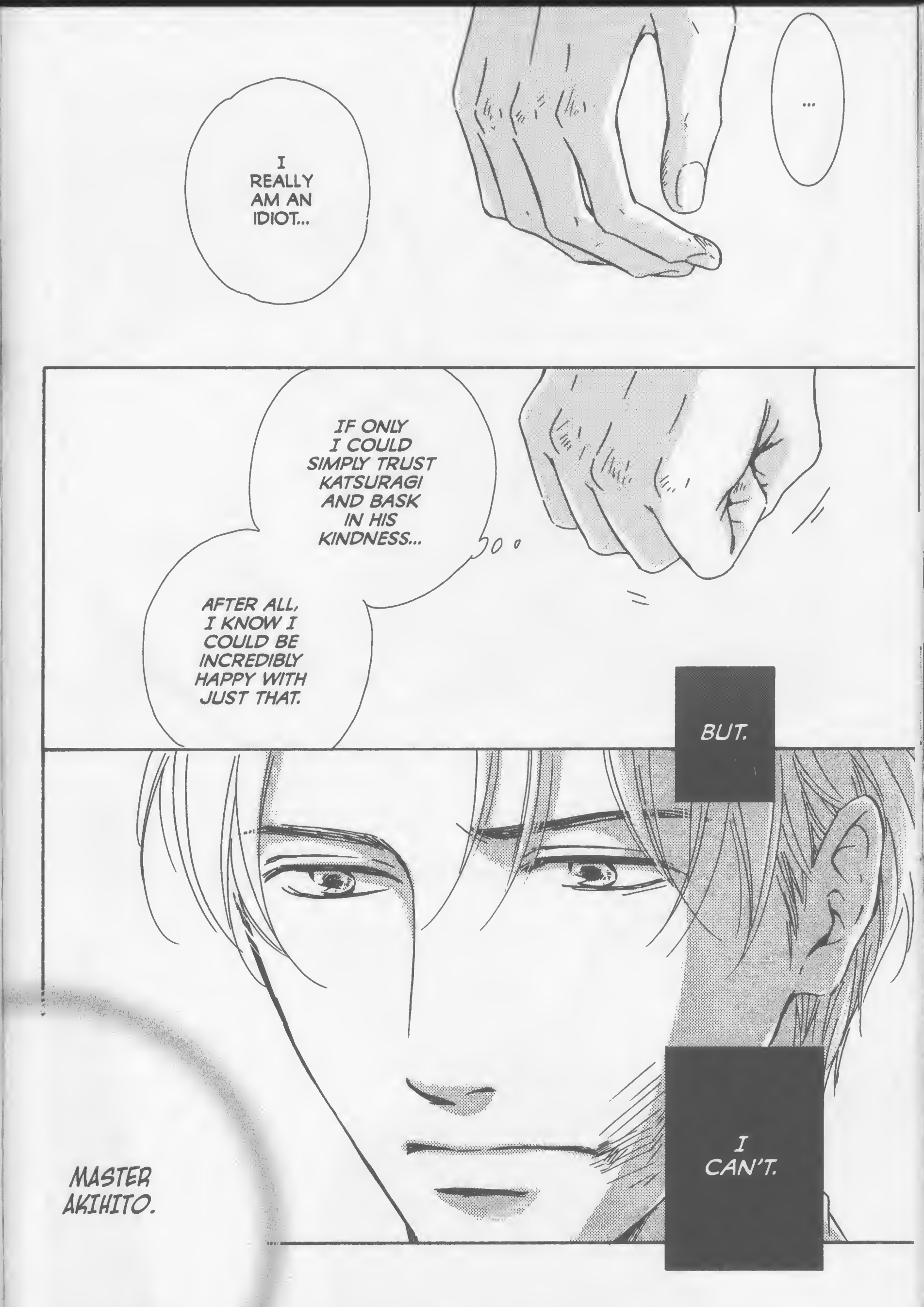

CHATTER
CHATTER
#!
TIK
TIK
O
...
TIK
HE'S LATE.
IN THE END...
...WILL EVERYTHING COME ABOUT JUST AS KATSURAGI HAD PLANNED?
RUSTLE
AFTER ALL, VISCOUNT AKIHITO IS AN INCREDIBLY STRANGE PERSON FOR THE NOBILITY.
EVER SINCE HE WAS LITTLE...
AND I'M DESPISED AS WELL...
WHEN IT COMES TO MASTER AKIHITO, THERE IS NO DOUBT.

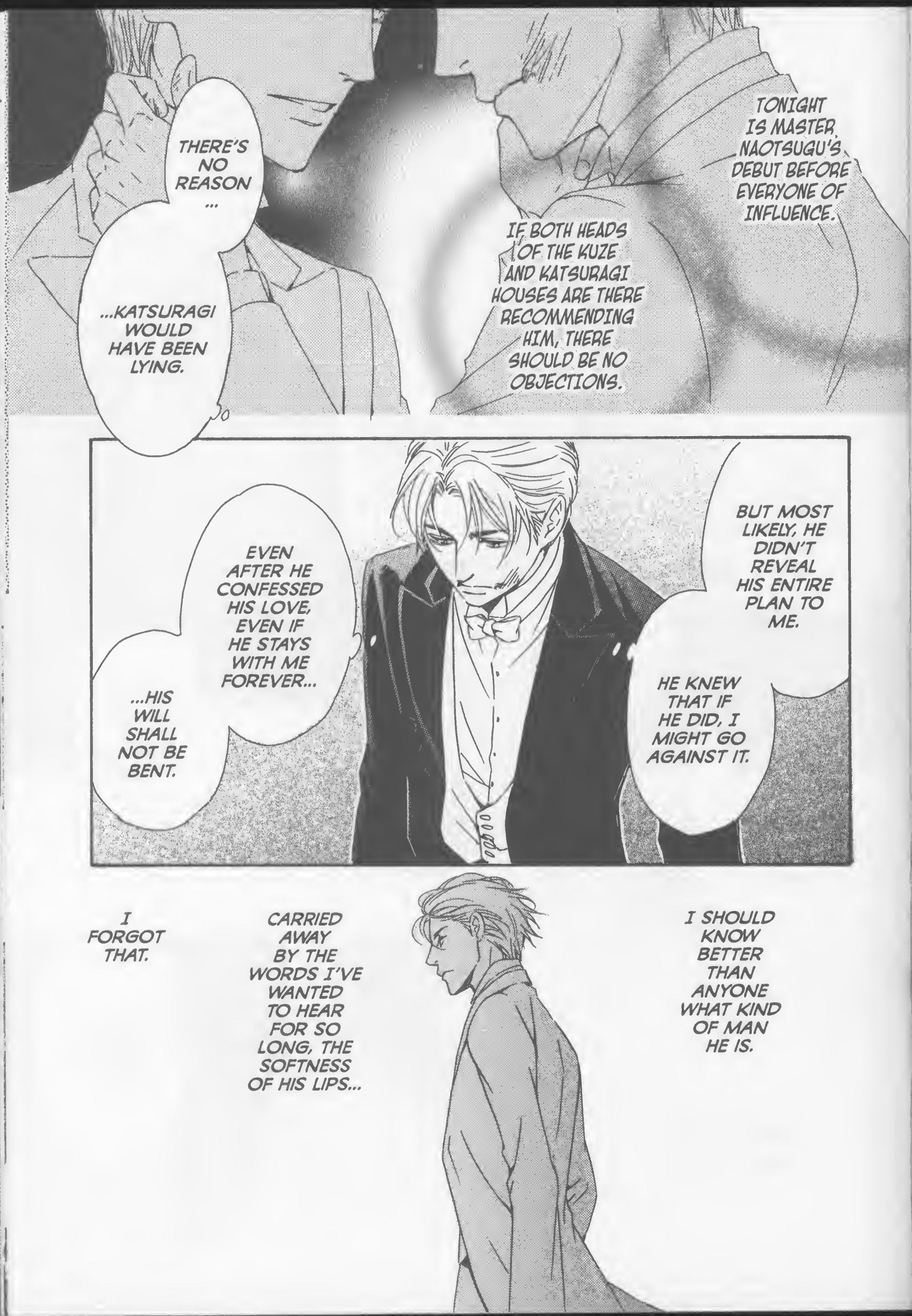

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU THAT HE MUST OBEY ME UNTIL HE COMES OF AGE?
EVEN THOUGH HE'S ALREADY FIFTEEN...
...HE HAS NO SELF-AWARENESS AS THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE.
MASTER SHIGEYUKI, THIS IS NO LAUGHING MATTER.
I MUST ALWAYS BE VIGILANT.
THERE IS NO TEST TO PROVE THAT HE HAS TURNED OUT AS I WISH.
SNICKER
LORD SHIGEYUKI?
IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?
NO.
I WAS JUST WONDERING HOW TAKAKO IS DOING AT THE MANOR.

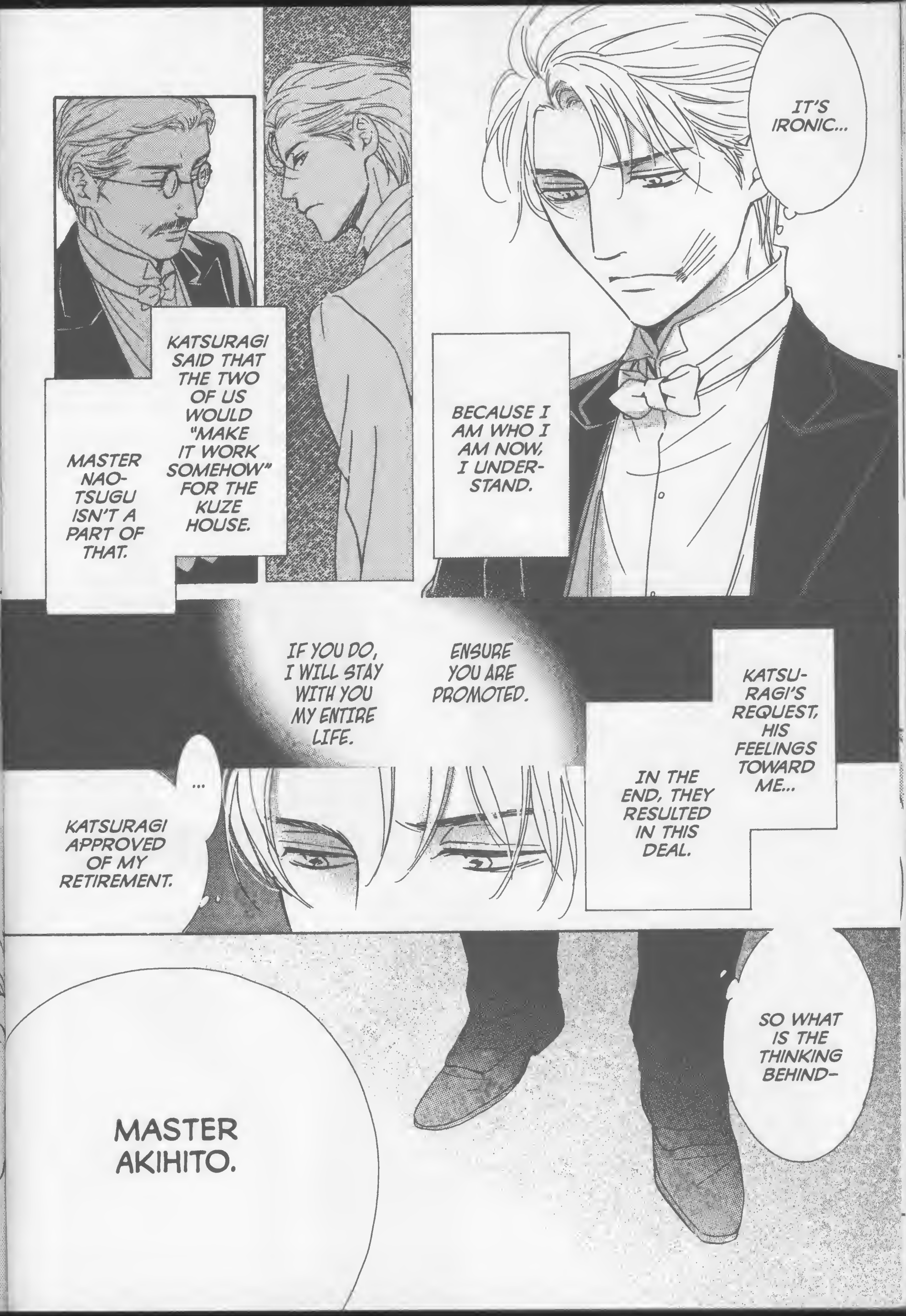

WE ARE SO LOOKING FORWARD TO THE BIRTH OF YOUR HEIR!
NOW, NOW, IT MIGHT BE A LITTLE PRINCESS, YOU KNOW.
CHATTER
CHATTER
I'VE BEEN HEARING RUMORS THAT LORD SHIGEYUKI MIGHT FINALLY BE INHERITING HIS TITLE.
YES.
THE FAMILY OF MY MOTHER-IN-LAW, LADY KAYOKO, ARE EXTREMELY WEALTHY MERCHANTS IN NIHON-BASHI.
ON THE OCCASION OF MY SUCCESSION, THEY WILL BE SO KIND AS TO BUILD US A NEW MANOR IN CELEBRATION.
THAT WE SAIONJIS, ONCE SO FORLORN AND IN SUCH A WRETCHED STATE, ARE NOW ABLE TO LIVE SO PEACEFULLY IS ENTIRELY DUE TO KATSURAGI.
I WILL BE IN HIS DEBT FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE.
...
WHAT...
...
...AM I TO...
...SAY TO THAT?
...
LORD SAIONJI.
WHISPER
EXCUSE ME.
WE'VE JUST HAD A REPORT FROM THE GATEKEEPER...

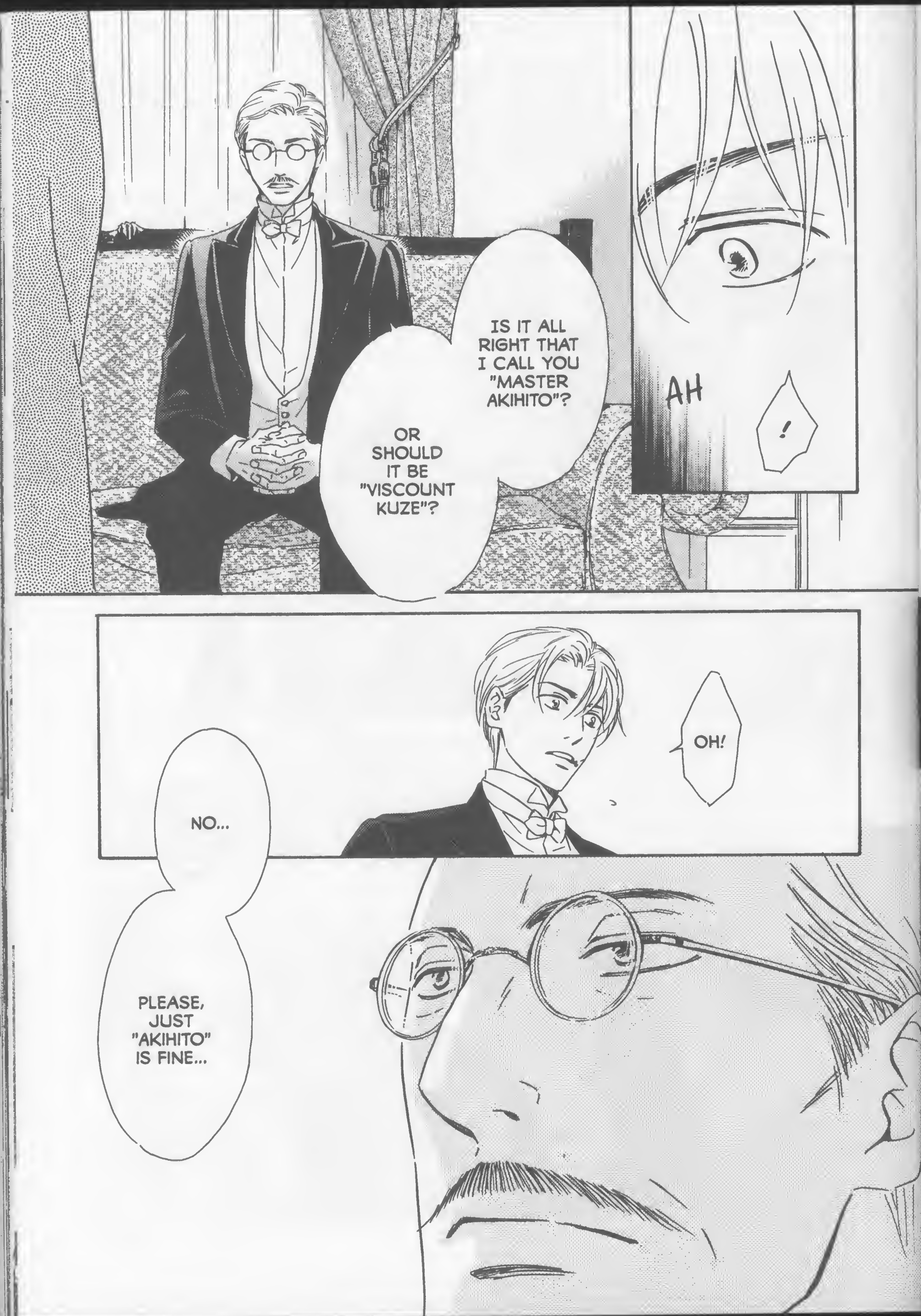

LORD SAION-JI?
APPARENTLY, A VERY UNUSUAL GUEST JUST ARRIVED.
IS THAT SO?
TELL MARQUISE MORIYAMA RIGHT AWAY.
VERY GOOD, SIR.
NOW THEN.
I WONDER IF EVERYTHING WILL GO AS KATSURAGI EXPECTS?
SNAP
ONLY FOR VISCOUNT AKIHITO HAS HE EXPENDED ALL HIS EFFORTS, UNABLE TO REMAIN COMPLETELY OBJECTIVE.
IT IS UNLIKELY THAT HE WOULD HAVE FORGOTTEN THIS.

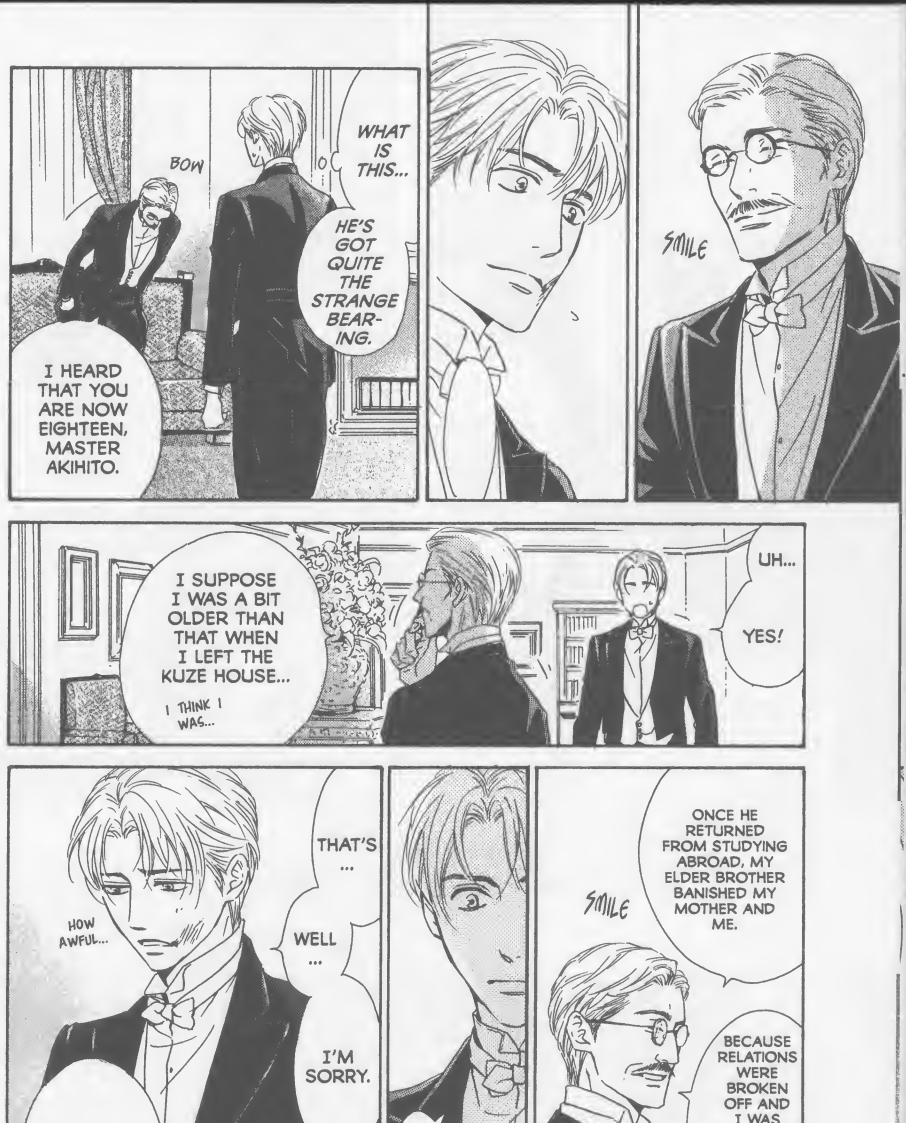

I CAN'T...
...OBEY YOU ANYMORE.
KATSURAGI.

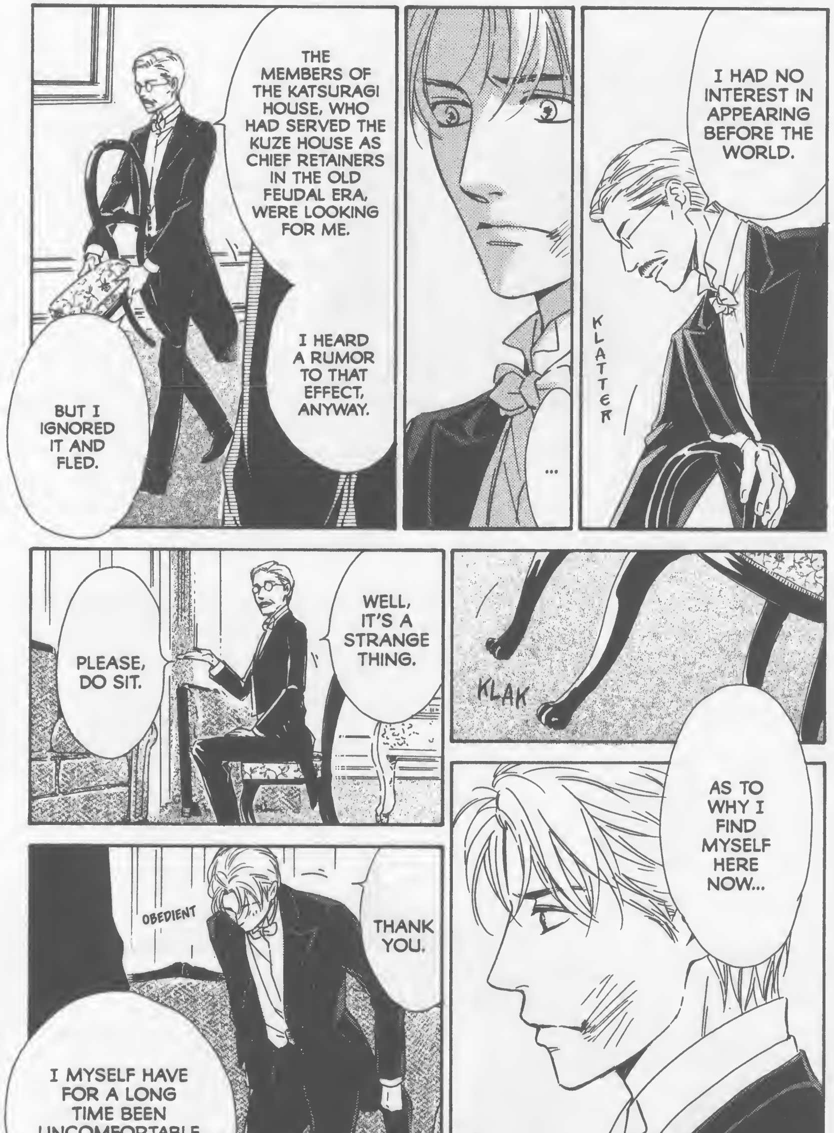

...
I REALLY AM AN IDIOT...
IF ONLY I COULD SIMPLY TRUST KATSURAGI AND BASK IN HIS KINDNESS...
AFTER ALL, I KNOW I COULD BE INCREDIBLY HAPPY WITH JUST THAT.
BUT.
I CAN'T.
MASTER AKIHITO.

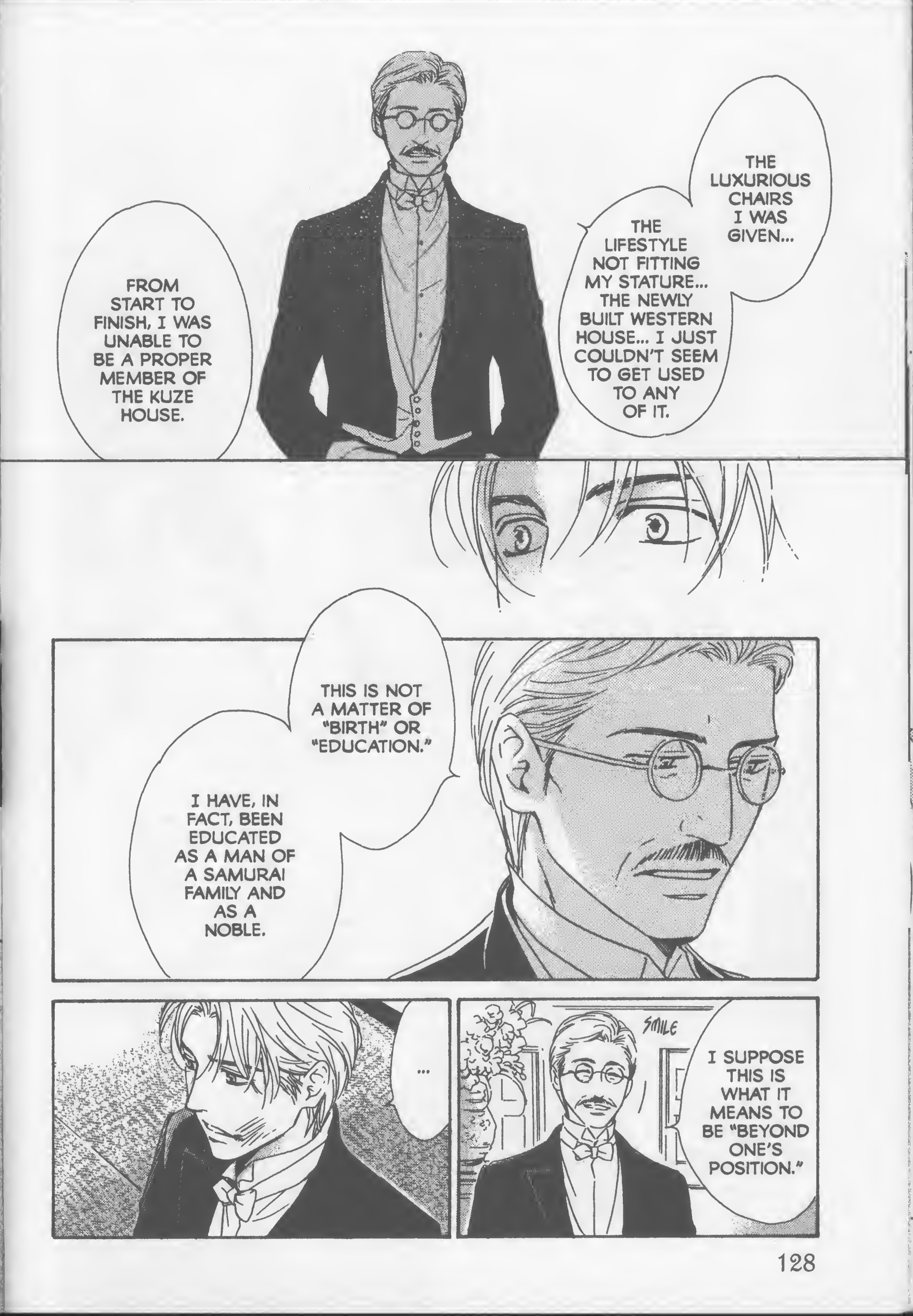

TONIGHT IS MASTER NAOTSUGU'S DEBUT BEFORE EVERYONE OF INFLUENCE.
IF BOTH HEADS OF THE KUZE AND KATSURAGI HOUSES ARE THERE RECOMMENDING HIM, THERE SHOULD BE NO OBJECTIONS.
THERE'S NO REASON...
...KATSURAGI WOULD HAVE BEEN LYING.
BUT MOST LIKELY, HE DIDN'T REVEAL HIS ENTIRE PLAN TO ME.
HE KNEW THAT IF HE DID, I MIGHT GO AGAINST IT.
EVEN AFTER HE CONFESSED HIS LOVE, EVEN IF HE STAYS WITH ME FOREVER...
...HIS WILL SHALL NOT BE BENT.
I SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE WHAT KIND OF MAN HE IS.
CARRIED AWAY BY THE WORDS I'VE WANTED TO HEAR FOR SO LONG, THE SOFTNESS OF HIS LIPS...
I FORGOT THAT.

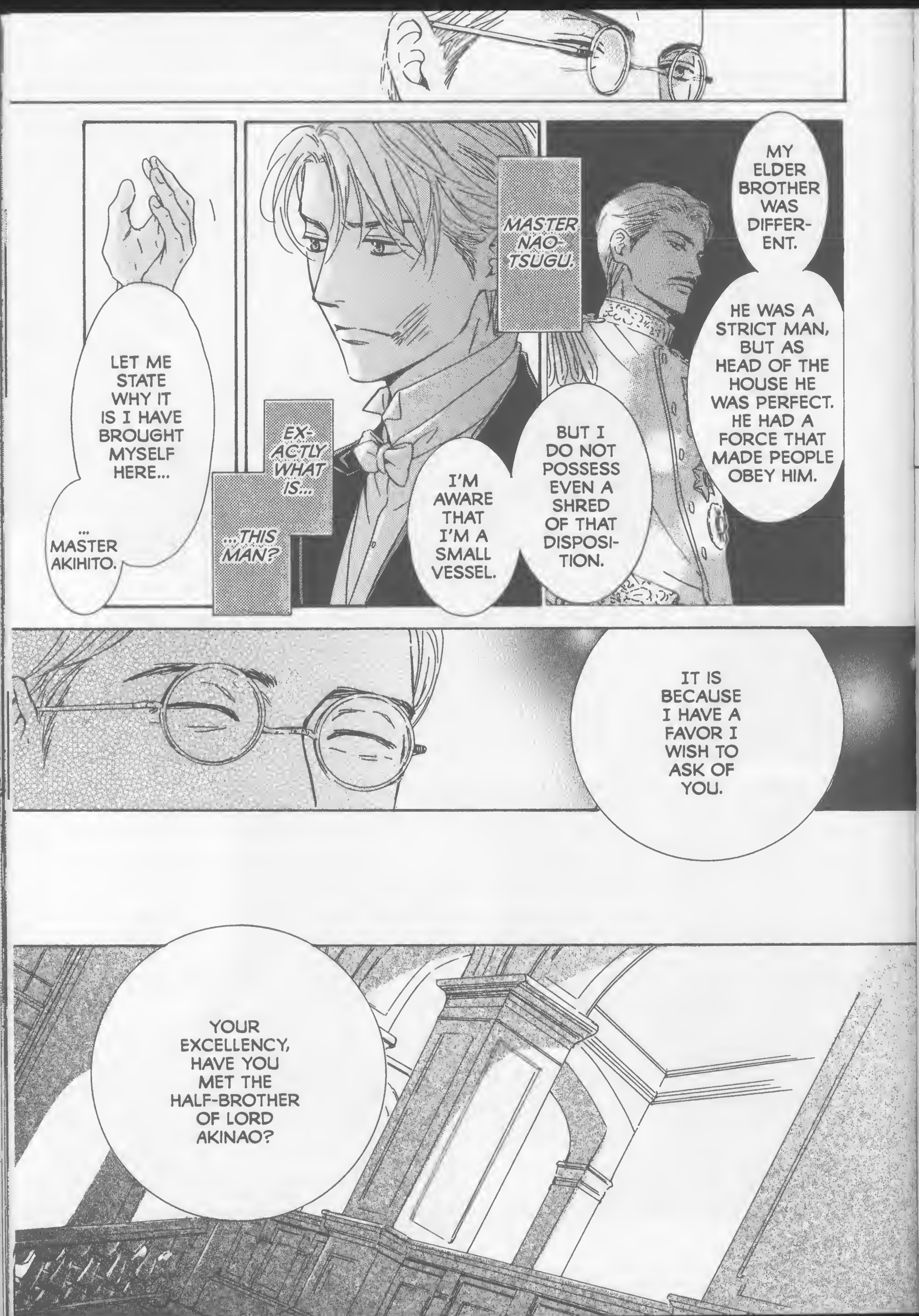

IT'S IRONIC...
BECAUSE I AM WHO I AM NOW, I UNDERSTAND.
KATSURAGI SAID THAT THE TWO OF US WOULD "MAKE IT WORK SOMEHOW" FOR THE KUZE HOUSE.
MASTER NAOTSUGU ISN'T A PART OF THAT.
KATSURAGI'S REQUEST, HIS FEELINGS TOWARD ME...
IN THE END, THEY RESULTED IN THIS DEAL.
ENSURE YOU ARE PROMOTED.
IF YOU DO, I WILL STAY WITH YOU MY ENTIRE LIFE.
...
KATSURAGI APPROVED OF MY RETIREMENT.
SO WHAT IS THE THINKING BEHIND—
MASTER AKIHITO.

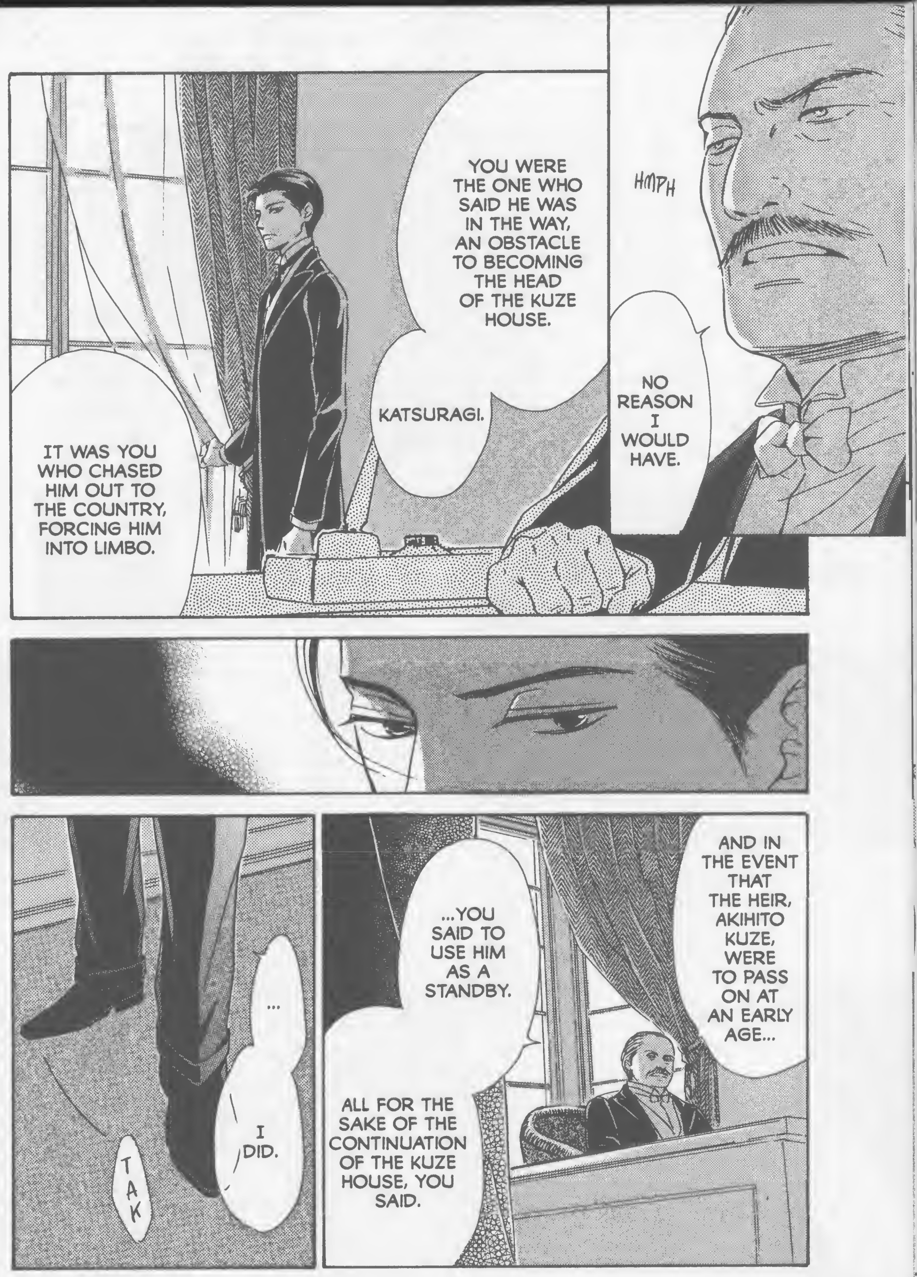

!
AH
IS IT ALL RIGHT THAT I CALL YOU "MASTER AKIHITO"?
OR SHOULD IT BE "VISCOUNT KUZE"?
OH!
NO...
PLEASE, JUST "AKIHITO" IS FINE...

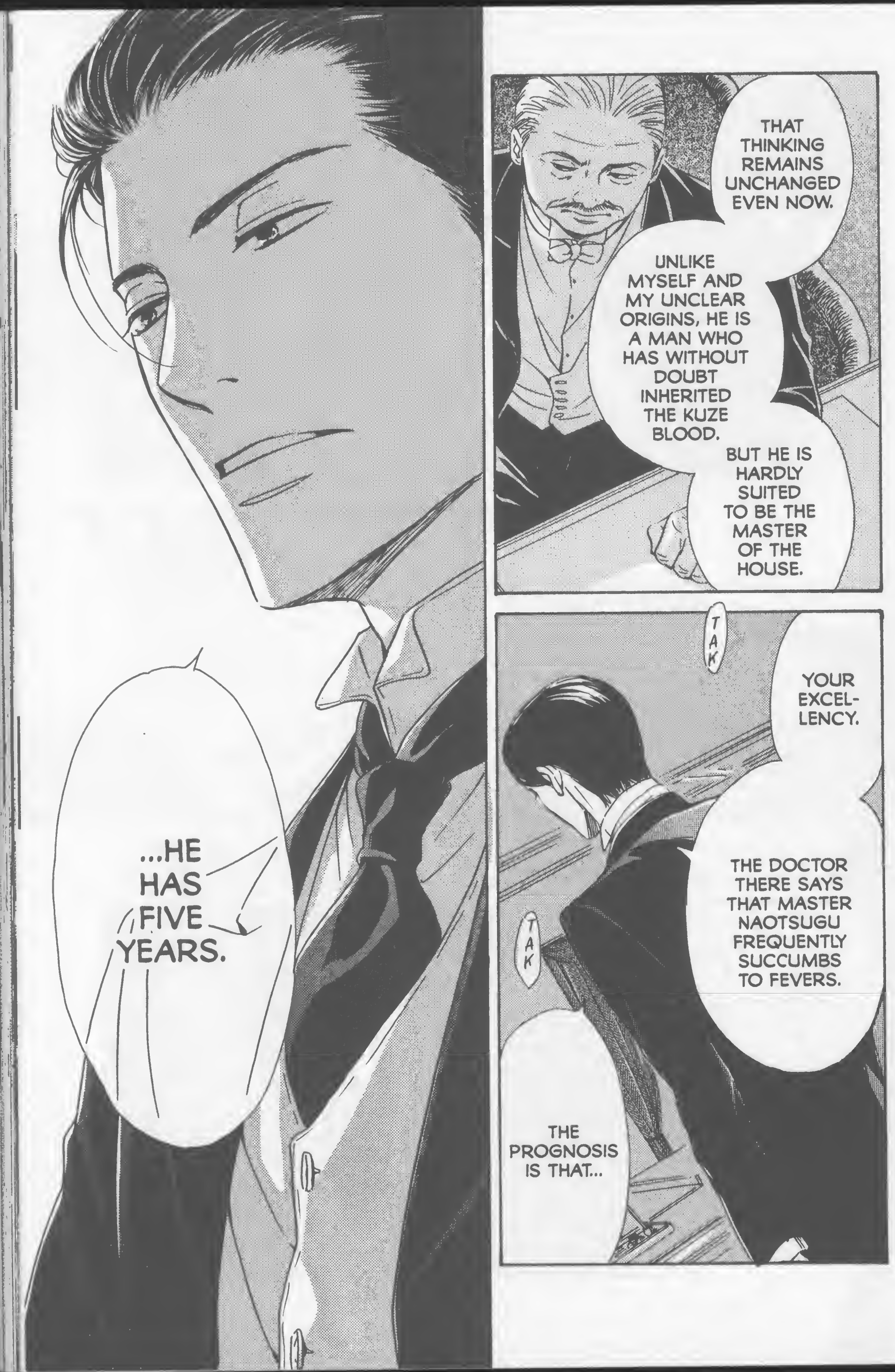

SMILE
WHAT IS THIS...
HE'S GOT QUITE THE STRANGE BEARING.
BOW
I HEARD THAT YOU ARE NOW EIGHTEEN, MASTER AKIHITO.
UH...
YES!
I SUPPOSE I WAS A BIT OLDER THAN THAT WHEN I LEFT THE KUZE HOUSE...
I THINK I WAS...
ONCE HE RETURNED FROM STUDYING ABROAD, MY ELDER BROTHER BANISHED MY MOTHER AND ME.
SMILE
BECAUSE RELATIONS WERE BROKEN OFF AND I WAS REMOVED FROM THE FAMILY REGISTER, MY LAST NAME IS NOT KUZE.
THIS SORT OF THING OFTEN HAPPENS WITH SAMURAI FAMILIES.
...
THAT'S... WELL...
I'M SORRY.
MY FATHER...
HOW AWFUL...
IT'S FINE.

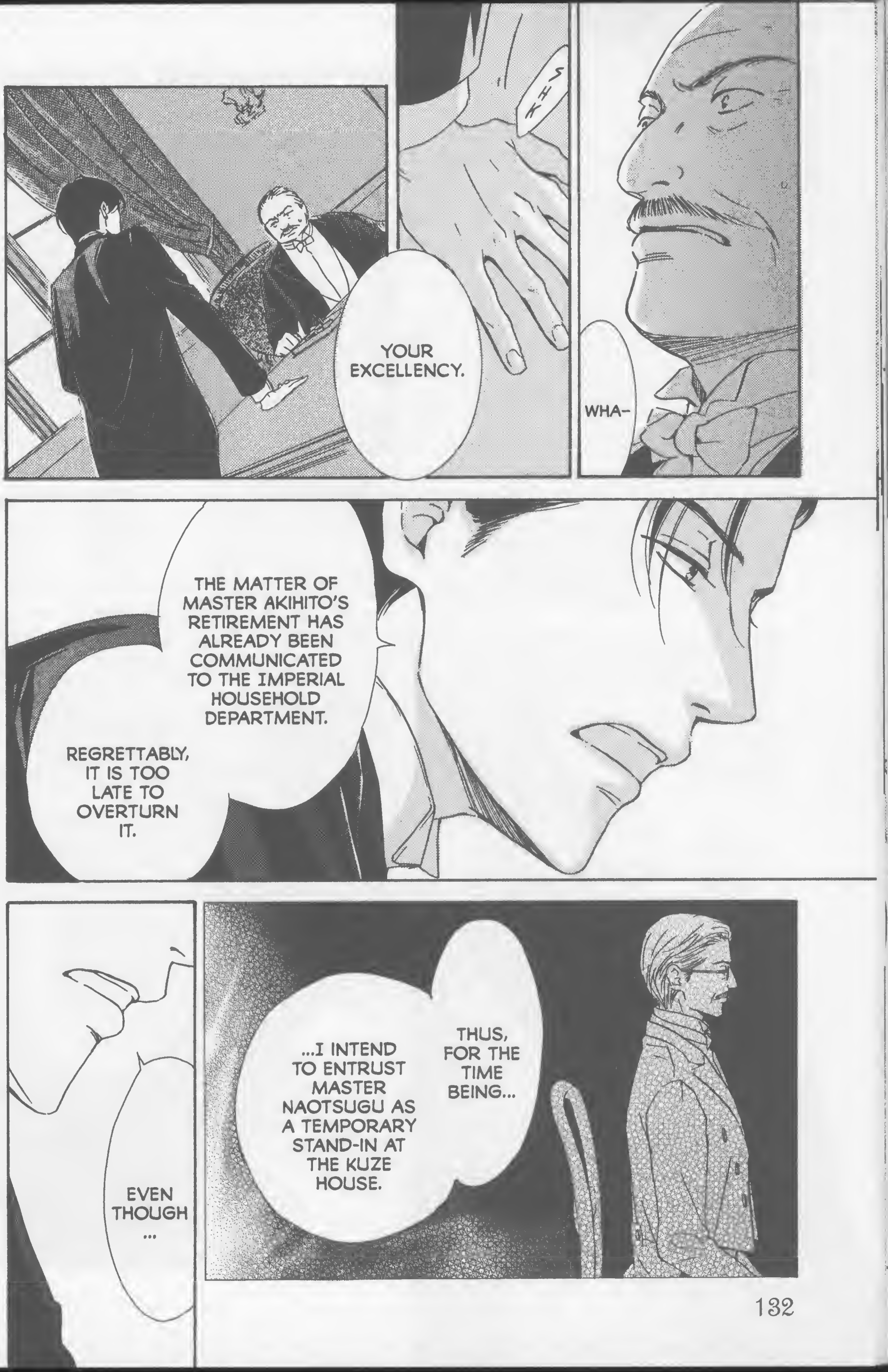

I HAD NO INTEREST IN APPEARING BEFORE THE WORLD.
KLATTER
...
THE MEMBERS OF THE KATSURAGI HOUSE, WHO HAD SERVED THE KUZE HOUSE AS CHIEF RETAINERS IN THE OLD FEUDAL ERA, WERE LOOKING FOR ME.
I HEARD A RUMOR TO THAT EFFECT, ANYWAY.
BUT I IGNORED IT AND FLED.
KLAK
WELL, IT'S A STRANGE THING.
PLEASE, DO SIT.
AS TO WHY I FIND MYSELF HERE NOW...
THANK YOU.
OBEDIENT
I MYSELF HAVE FOR A LONG TIME BEEN UNCOMFORTABLE ON THESE SOFT SOFAS.

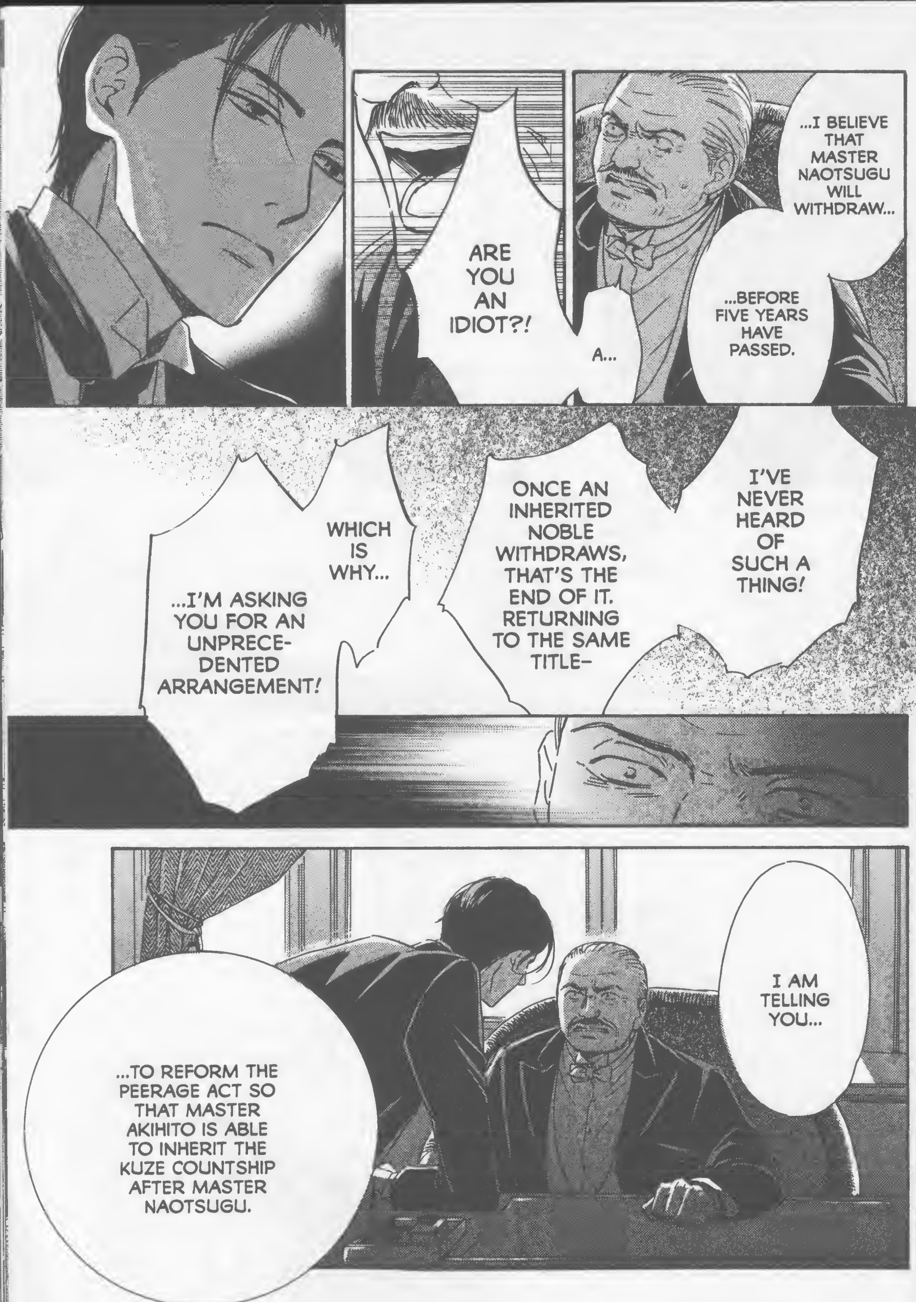

THE LUXURIOUS CHAIRS I WAS GIVEN...
THE LIFESTYLE NOT FITTING MY STATURE... THE NEWLY BUILT WESTERN HOUSE... I JUST COULDN'T SEEM TO GET USED TO ANY OF IT.
FROM START TO FINISH, I WAS UNABLE TO BE A PROPER MEMBER OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
THIS IS NOT A MATTER OF "BIRTH" OR "EDUCATION."
I HAVE, IN FACT, BEEN EDUCATED AS A MAN OF A SAMURAI FAMILY AND AS A NOBLE.
SMILE
I SUPPOSE THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE "BEYOND ONE'S POSITION."
...


MY ELDER BROTHER WAS DIFFERENT.
HE WAS A STRICT MAN, BUT AS HEAD OF THE HOUSE HE WAS PERFECT. HE HAD A FORCE THAT MADE PEOPLE OBEY HIM.
MASTER NAOTSUGU.
BUT I DO NOT POSSESS EVEN A SHRED OF THAT DISPOSITION.
I'M AWARE THAT I'M A SMALL VESSEL.
EXACTLY WHAT IS...
...THIS MAN?
LET ME STATE WHY IT IS I HAVE BROUGHT MYSELF HERE...
...MASTER AKIHITO.
IT IS BECAUSE I HAVE A FAVOR I WISH TO ASK OF YOU.
YOUR EXCELLENCY, HAVE YOU MET THE HALF-BROTHER OF LORD AKINAO?

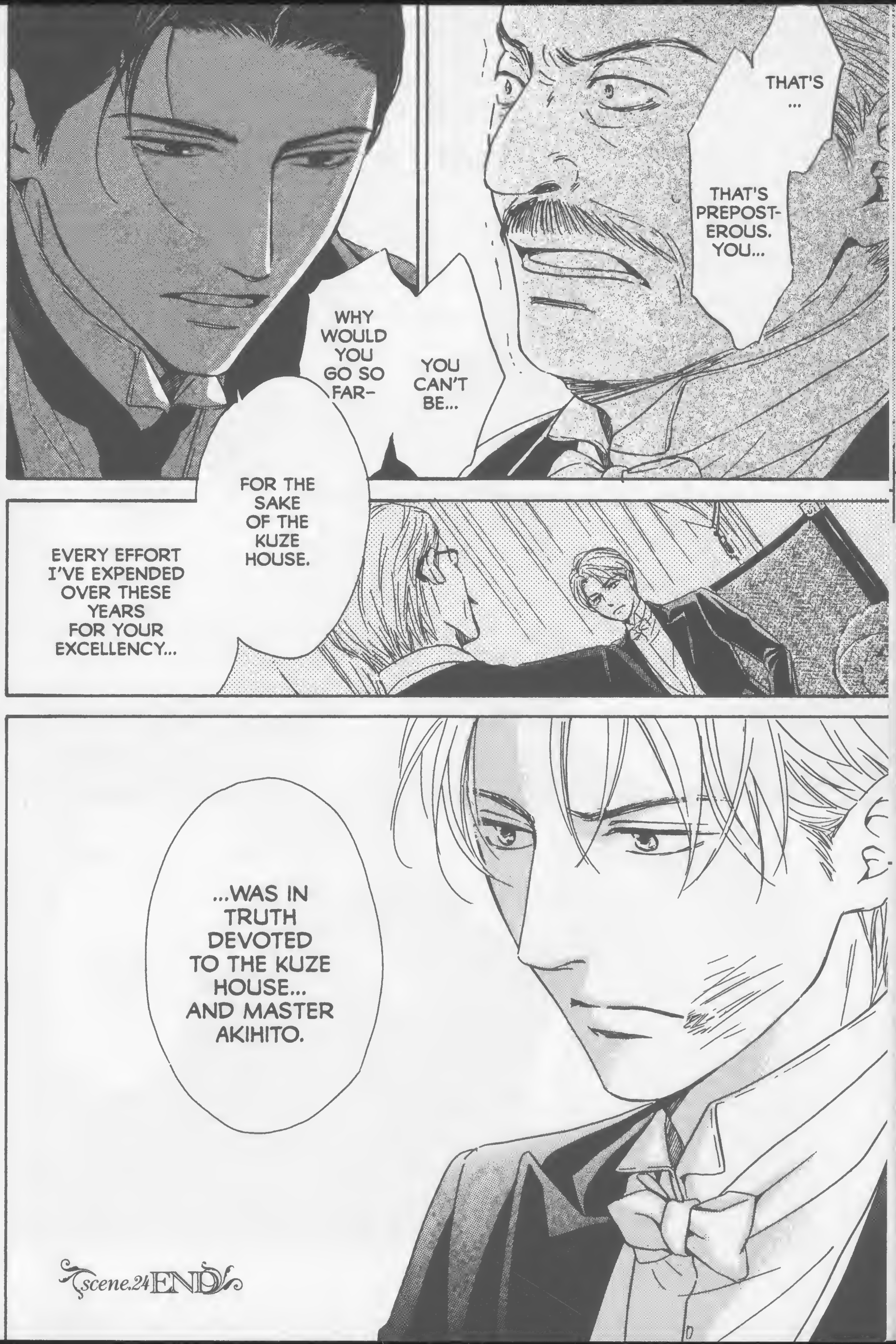

HMPH
NO REASON I WOULD HAVE.
YOU WERE THE ONE WHO SAID HE WAS IN THE WAY, AN OBSTACLE TO BECOMING THE HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
KATSURAGI.
IT WAS YOU WHO CHASED HIM OUT TO THE COUNTRY, FORCING HIM INTO LIMBO.
AND IN THE EVENT THAT THE HEIR, AKIHITO KUZE, WERE TO PASS ON AT AN EARLY AGE...
...YOU SAID TO USE HIM AS A STANDBY.
ALL FOR THE SAKE OF THE CONTINUATION OF THE KUZE HOUSE, YOU SAID.
...
I DID.
TAK

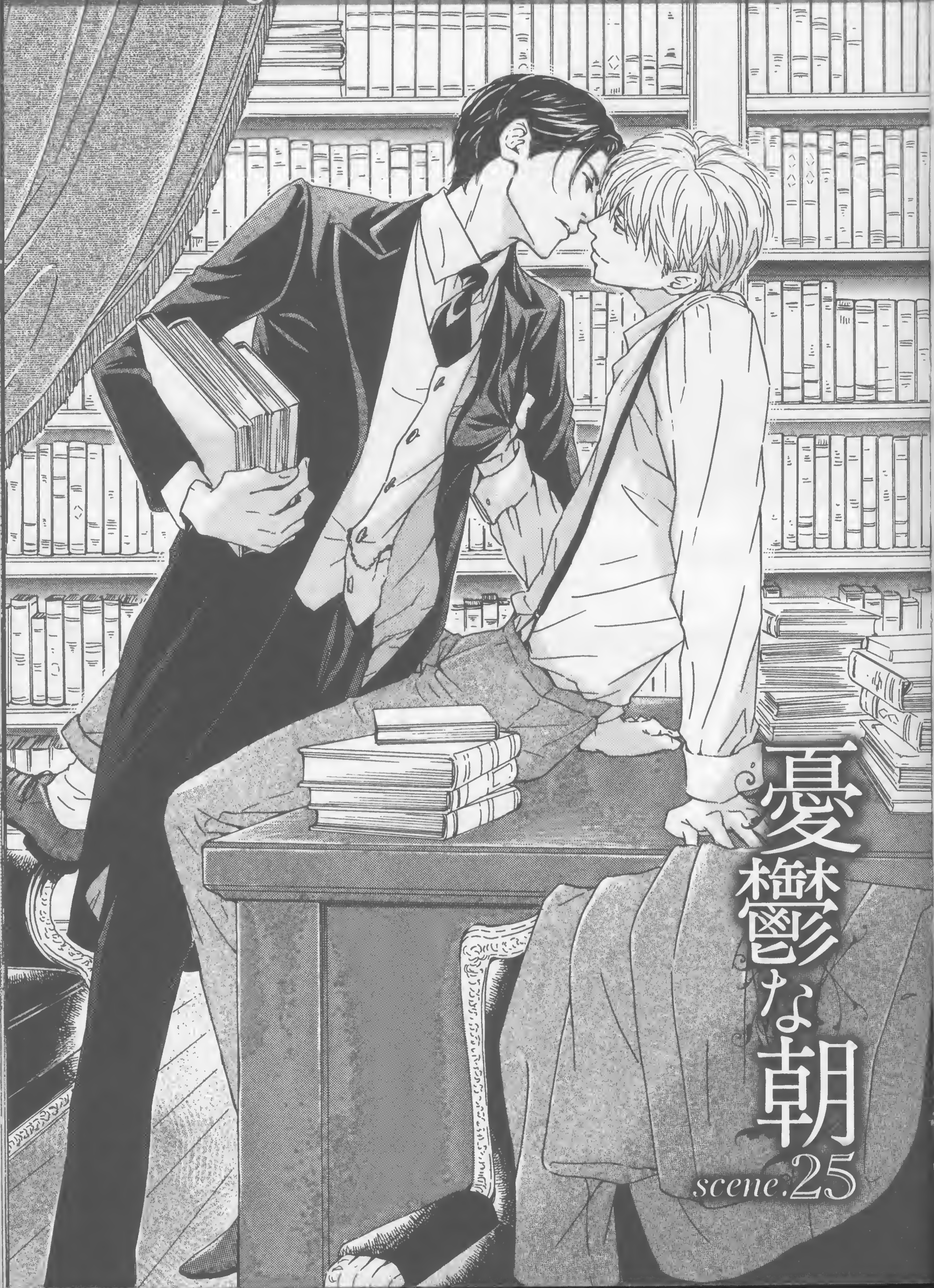

THAT THINKING REMAINS UNCHANGED EVEN NOW.
UNLIKE MYSELF AND MY UNCLEAR ORIGINS, HE IS A MAN WHO HAS WITHOUT DOUBT INHERITED THE KUZE BLOOD.
BUT HE IS HARDLY SUITED TO BE THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.
TAK
YOUR EXCELLENCY.
THE DOCTOR THERE SAYS THAT MASTER NAOTSUGU FREQUENTLY SUCCUMBS TO FEVERS.
TAK
THE PROGNOSIS IS THAT...
...HE HAS FIVE YEARS.


WHA-
SHK
YOUR EXCELLENCY.
THE MATTER OF MASTER AKIHITO'S RETIREMENT HAS ALREADY BEEN COMMUNICATED TO THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT.
REGRETTABLY, IT IS TOO LATE TO OVERTURN IT.
THUS, FOR THE TIME BEING...
...I INTEND TO ENTRUST MASTER NAOTSUGU AS A TEMPORARY STAND-IN AT THE KUZE HOUSE.
EVEN THOUGH ...


...I BELIEVE THAT MASTER NAOTSUGU WILL WITHDRAW...
...BEFORE FIVE YEARS HAVE PASSED.
A...
ARE YOU AN IDIOT?!
I'VE NEVER HEARD OF SUCH A THING!
ONCE AN INHERITED NOBLE WITHDRAWS, THAT'S THE END OF IT. RETURNING TO THE SAME TITLE-
WHICH IS WHY...
...I'M ASKING YOU FOR AN UNPRECEDENTED ARRANGEMENT!
I AM TELLING YOU...
...TO REFORM THE PEERAGE ACT SO THAT MASTER AKIHITO IS ABLE TO INHERIT THE KUZE COUNTSHIP AFTER MASTER NAOTSUGU.

憂鬱な朝

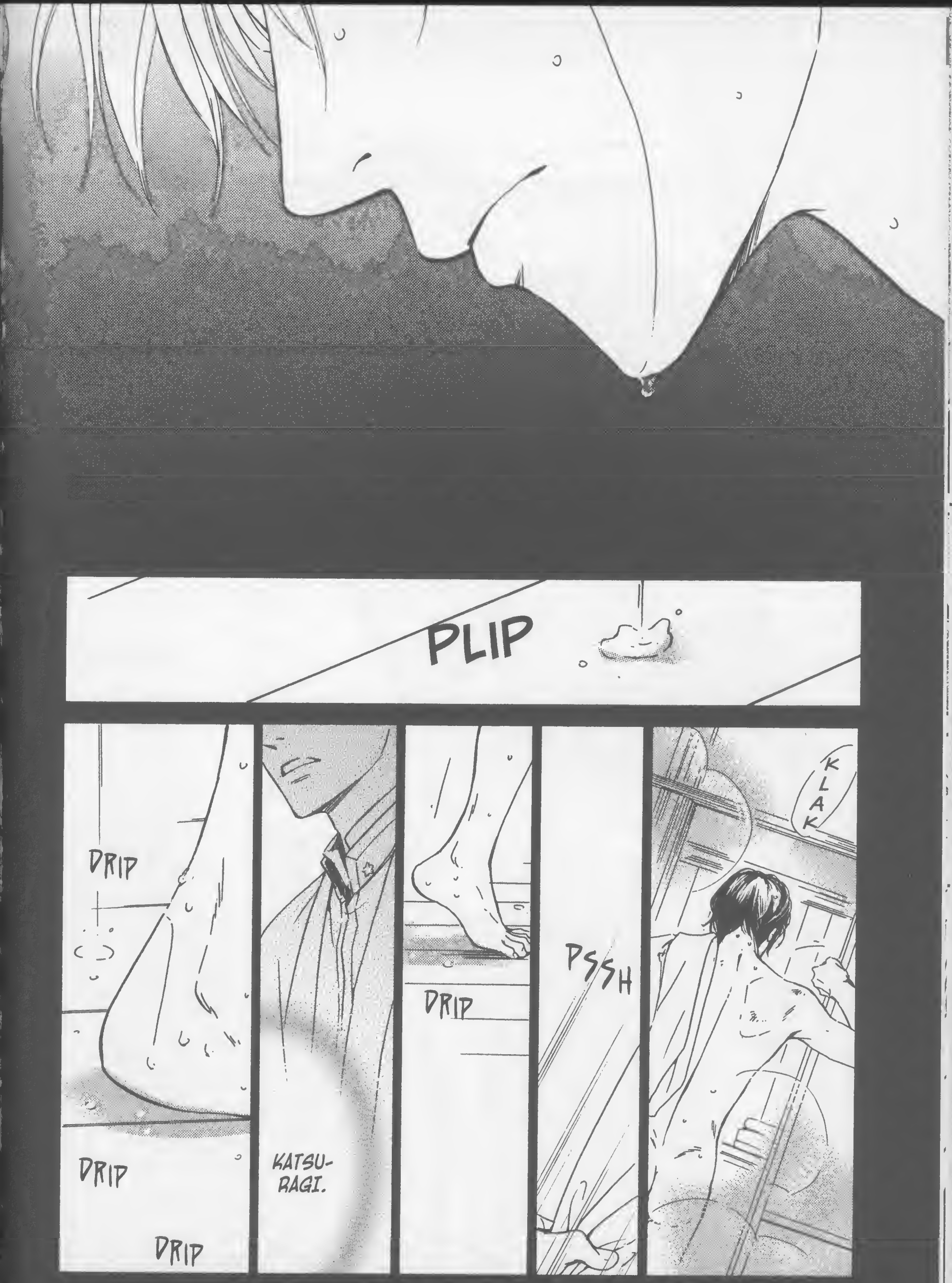

THAT'S ...
THAT'S PREPOSTEROUS. YOU...
YOU CAN'T BE...
WHY WOULD YOU GO SO FAR–
FOR THE SAKE OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
EVERY EFFORT I'VE EXPENDED OVER THESE YEARS FOR YOUR EXCELLENCY...
...WAS IN TRUTH DEVOTED TO THE KUZE HOUSE... AND MASTER AKIHITO.
scene.24 END

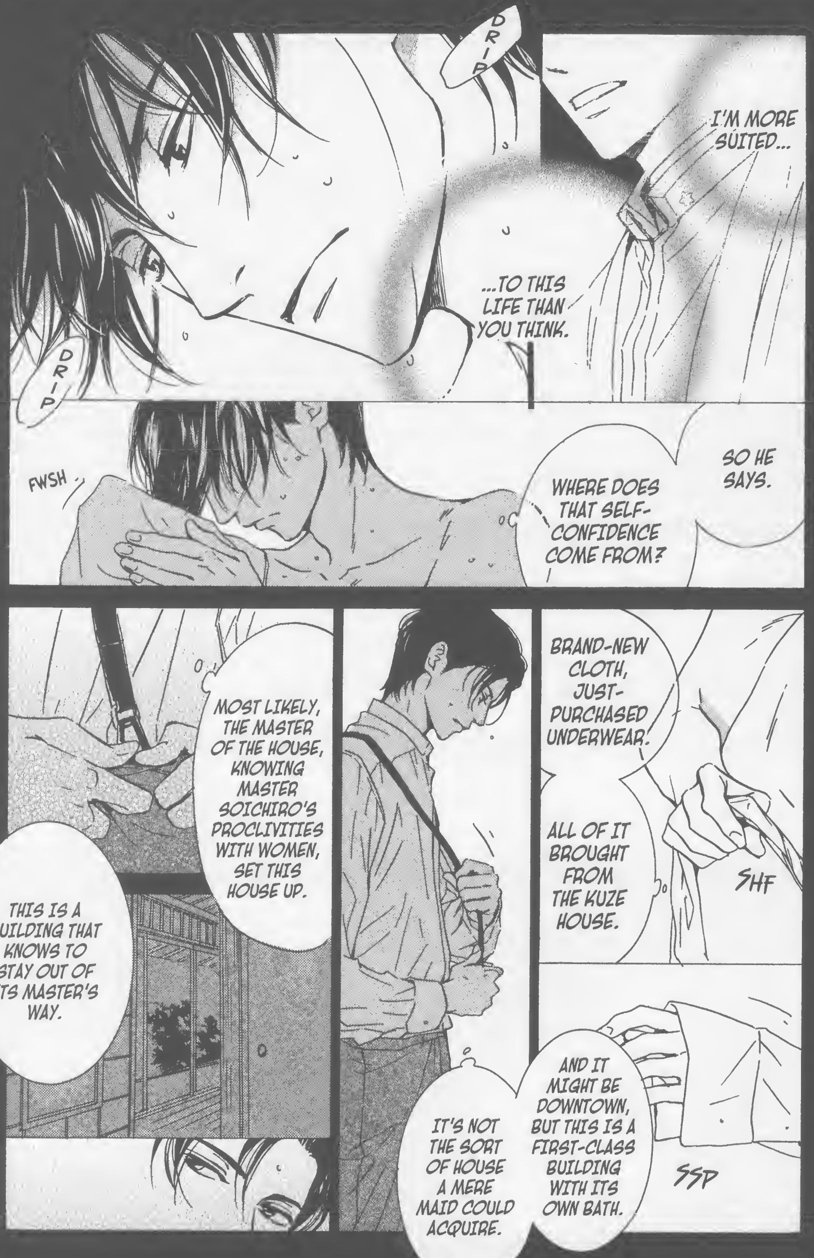


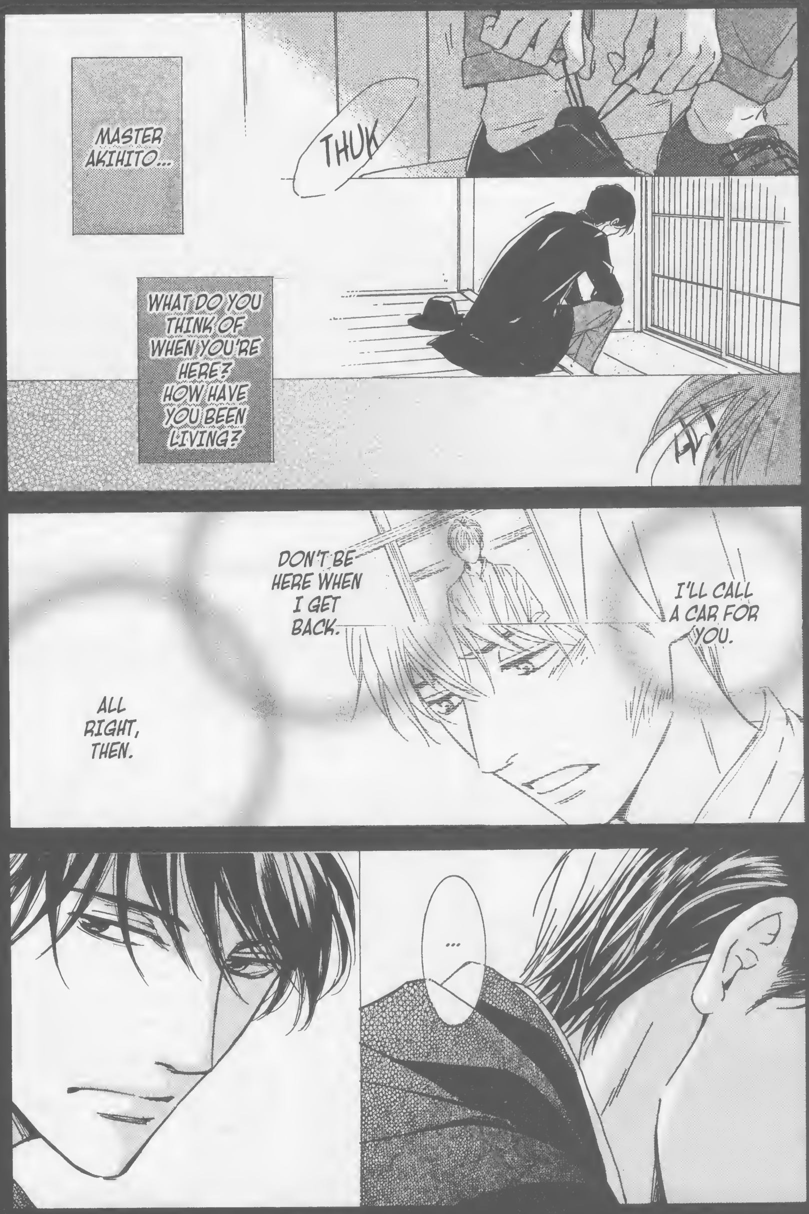
憂鬱な朝

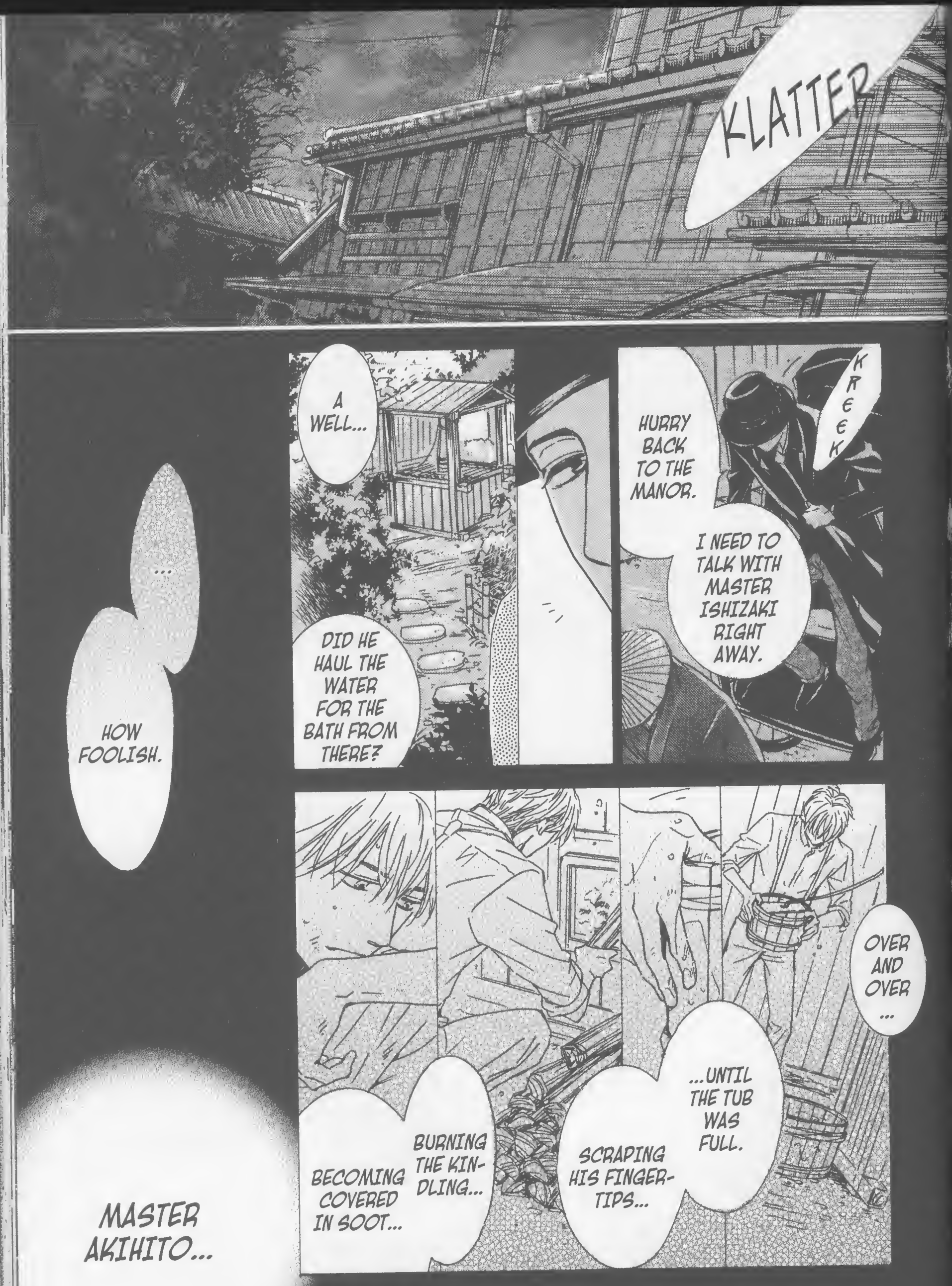
scene.25

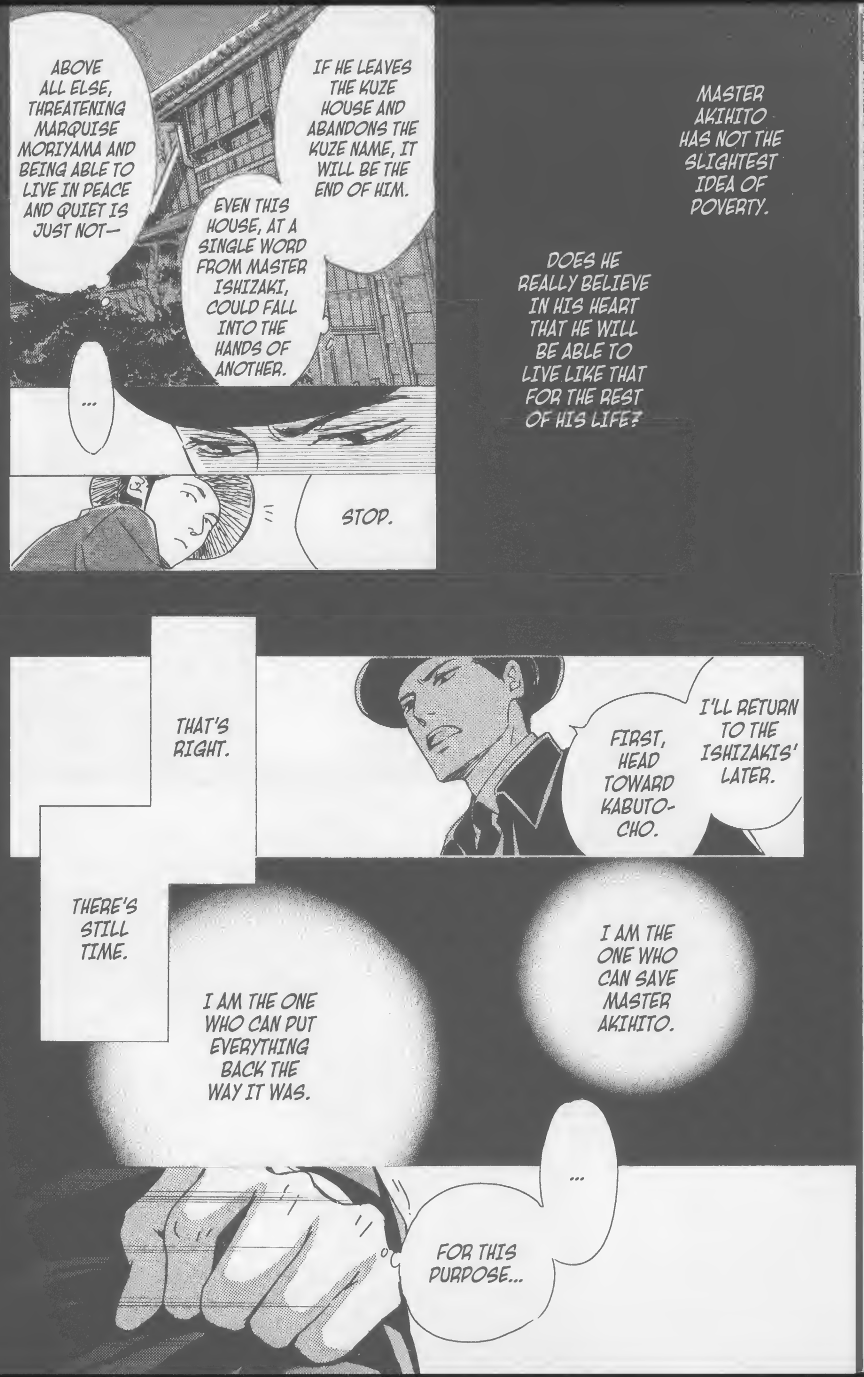
憂鬱な朝

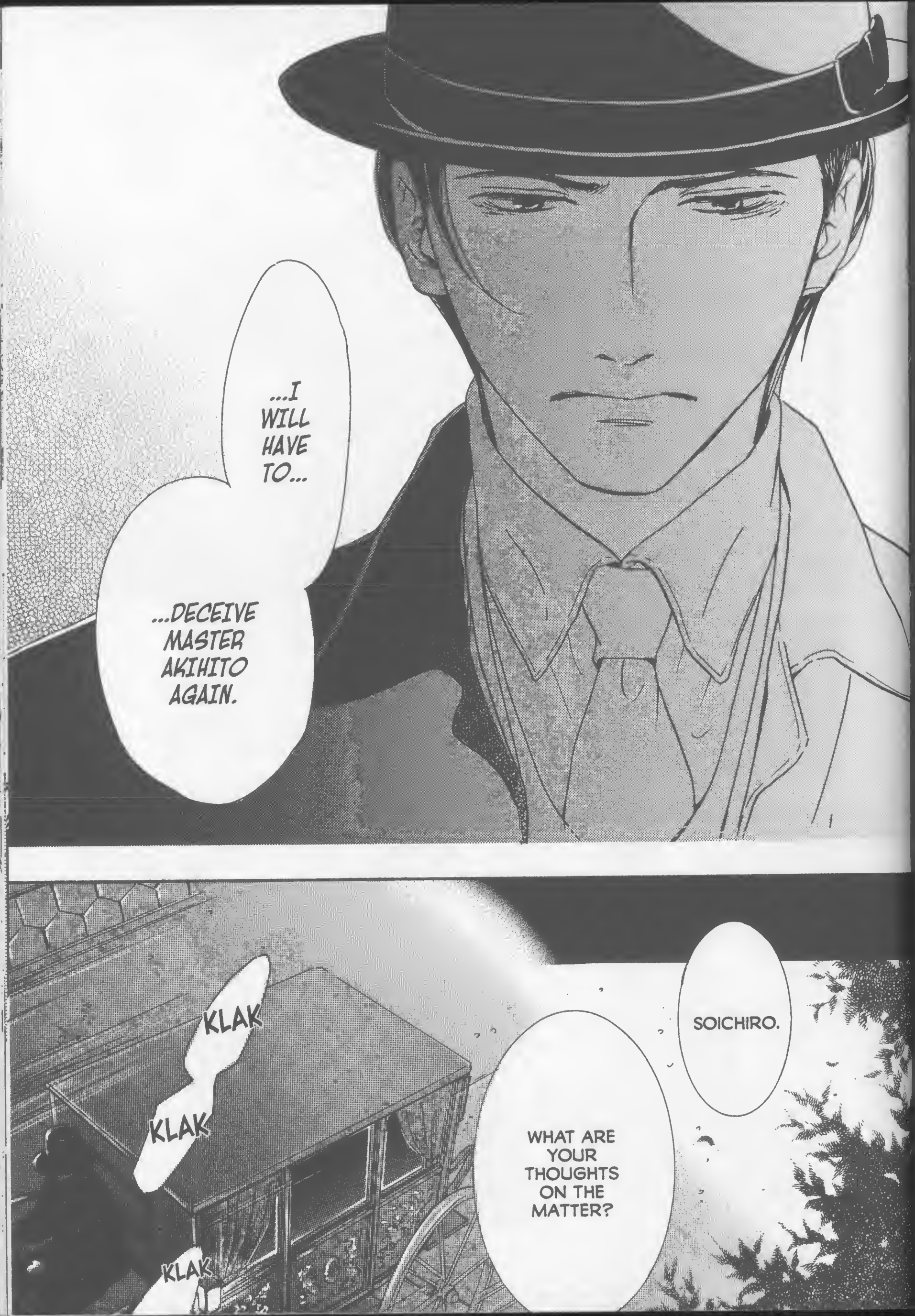

PLIP
KLAK
PSSH
DRIP
KATSURAGI.
DRIP
DRIP
DRIP

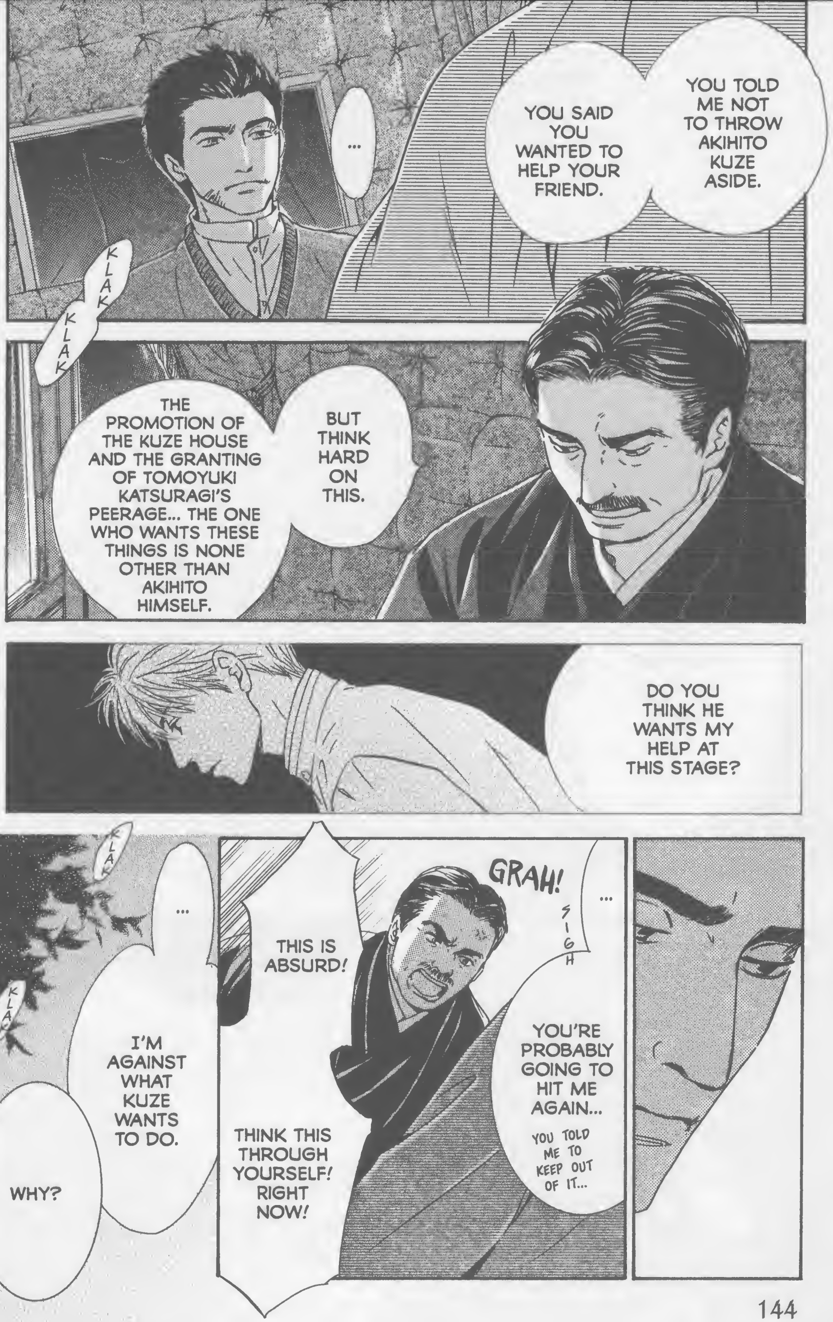

DRIP
I'M MORE SUITED...
...TO THIS LIFE THAN YOU THINK.
DRIP
SO HE SAYS.
WHERE DOES THAT SELF-CONFIDENCE COME FROM?
FWSH
BRAND-NEW CLOTH, JUST-PURCHASED UNDERWEAR.
ALL OF IT BROUGHT FROM THE KUZE HOUSE.
SHF
MOST LIKELY, THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE, KNOWING MASTER SOICHIRO'S PROCLIVITIES WITH WOMEN, SET THIS HOUSE UP.
THIS IS A BUILDING THAT KNOWS TO STAY OUT OF ITS MASTER'S WAY.
AND IT MIGHT BE DOWNTOWN, BUT THIS IS A FIRST-CLASS BUILDING WITH ITS OWN BATH.
IT'S NOT THE SORT OF HOUSE A MERE MAID COULD ACQUIRE.
SSP

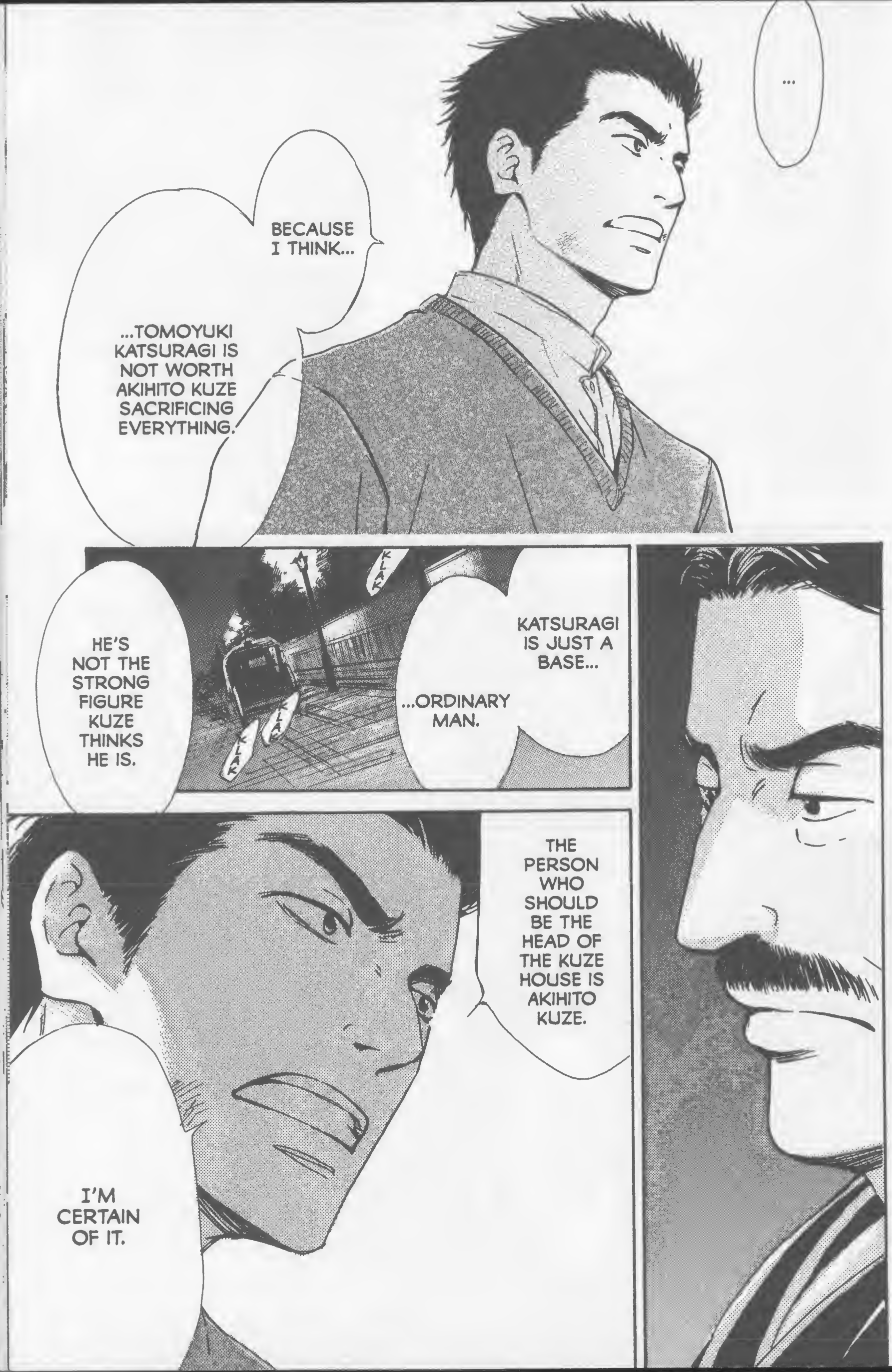

THUK
MASTER AKIHITO...
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF WHEN YOU'RE HERE? HOW HAVE YOU BEEN LIVING?
I'LL CALL A CAR FOR YOU.
DON'T BE HERE WHEN I GET BACK.
ALL RIGHT, THEN.
...

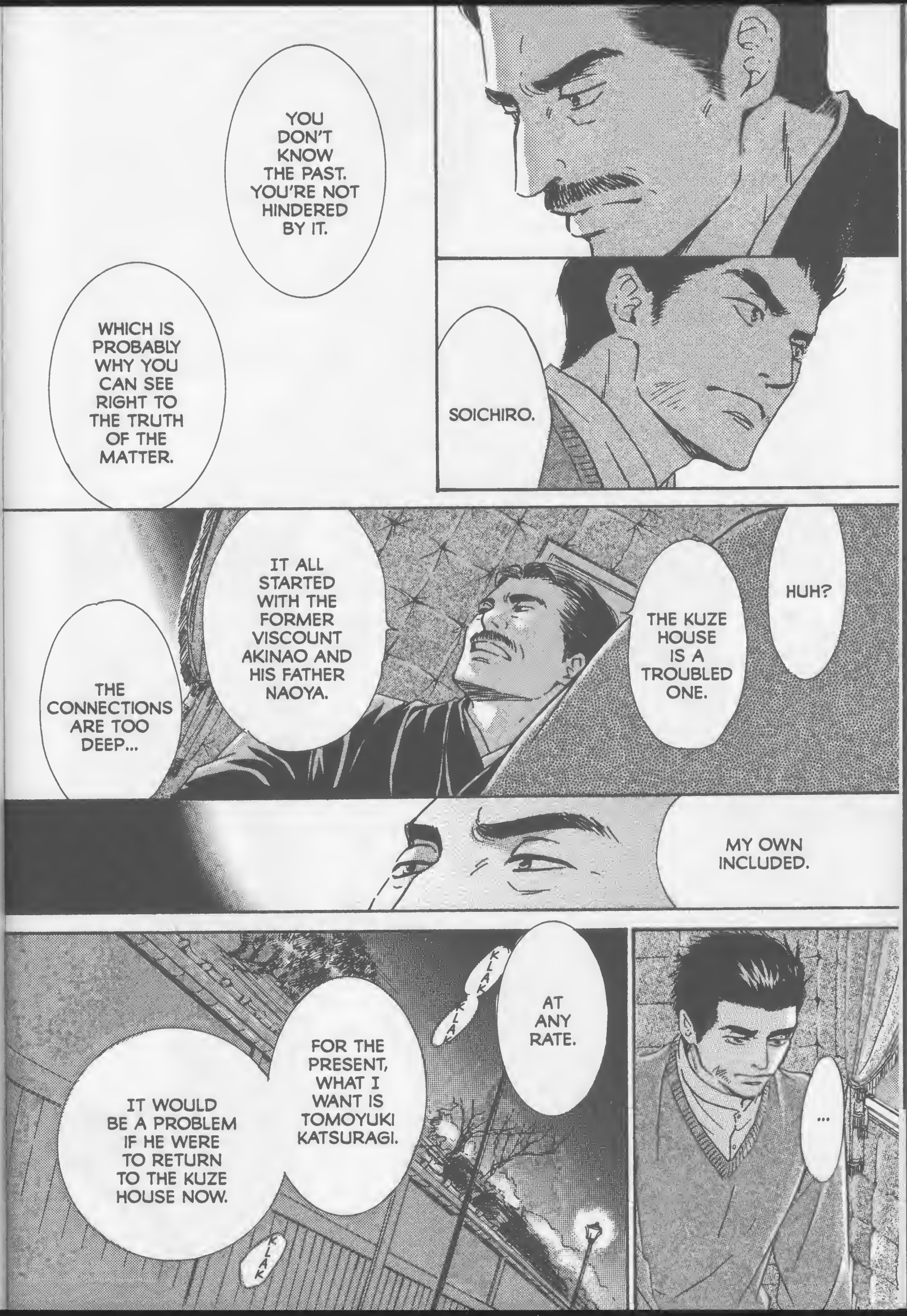

KLATTER
KREEK
HURRY BACK TO THE MANOR.
I NEED TO TALK WITH MASTER ISHIZAKI RIGHT AWAY.
A WELL...
DID HE HAUL THE WATER FOR THE BATH FROM THERE?
...
HOW FOOLISH.
OVER AND OVER...
...UNTIL THE TUB WAS FULL.
SCRAPING HIS FINGERTIPS...
BURNING THE KINDLING...
BECOMING COVERED IN SOOT...
MASTER AKIHITO...

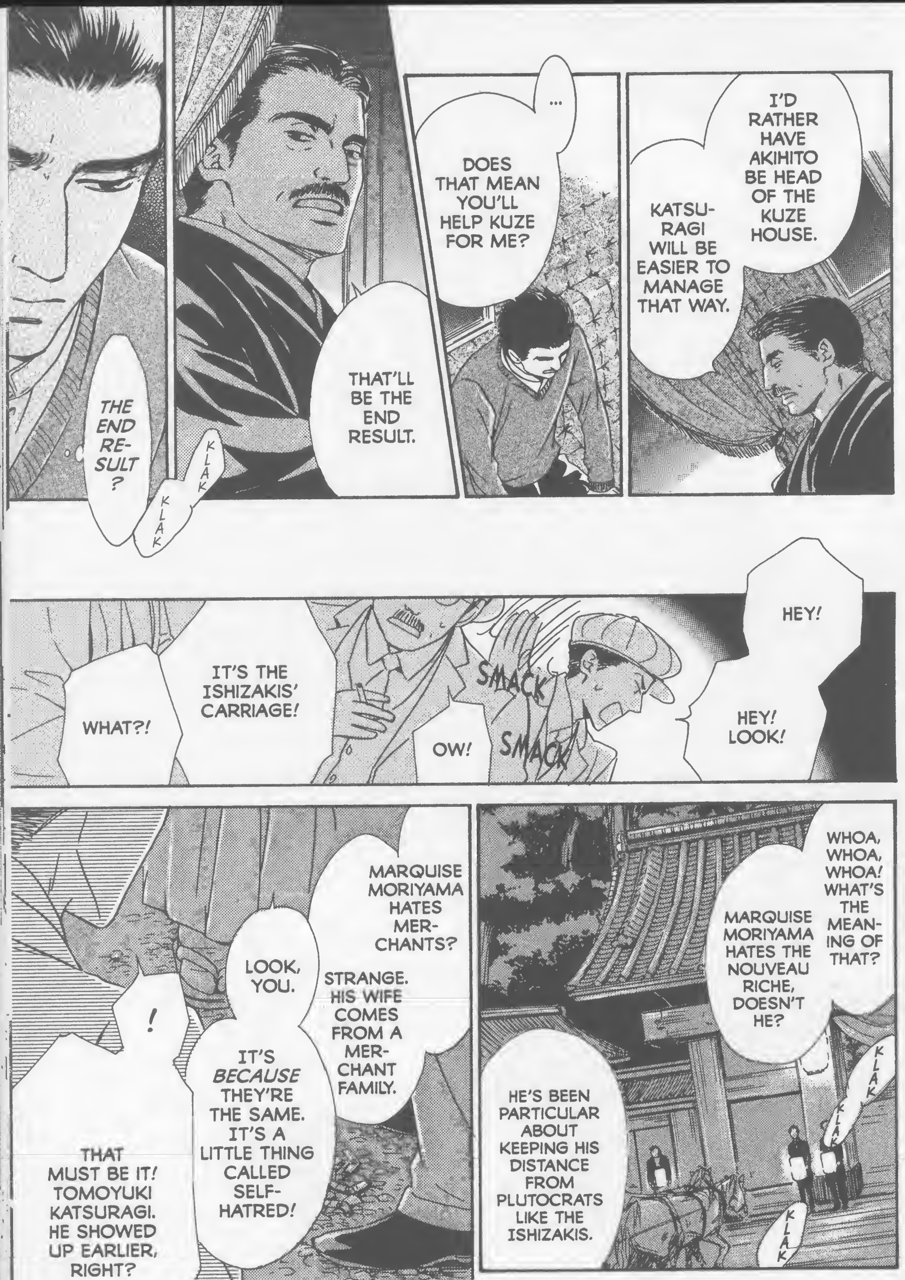

MASTER AKIHITO HAS NOT THE SLIGHTEST IDEA OF POVERTY.
DOES HE REALLY BELIEVE IN HIS HEART THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO LIVE LIKE THAT FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE?
IF HE LEAVES THE KUZE HOUSE AND ABANDONS THE KUZE NAME, IT WILL BE THE END OF HIM.
EVEN THIS HOUSE, AT A SINGLE WORD FROM MASTER ISHIZAKI, COULD FALL INTO THE HANDS OF ANOTHER.
ABOVE ALL ELSE, THREATENING MARQUISE MORIYAMA AND BEING ABLE TO LIVE IN PEACE AND QUIET IS JUST NOT—
...
STOP.
I'LL RETURN TO THE ISHIZAKIS' LATER.
FIRST, HEAD TOWARD KABUTO-CHO.
THAT'S RIGHT.
THERE'S STILL TIME.
I AM THE ONE WHO CAN SAVE MASTER AKIHITO.
I AM THE ONE WHO CAN PUT EVERYTHING BACK THE WAY IT WAS.
...
FOR THIS PURPOSE...

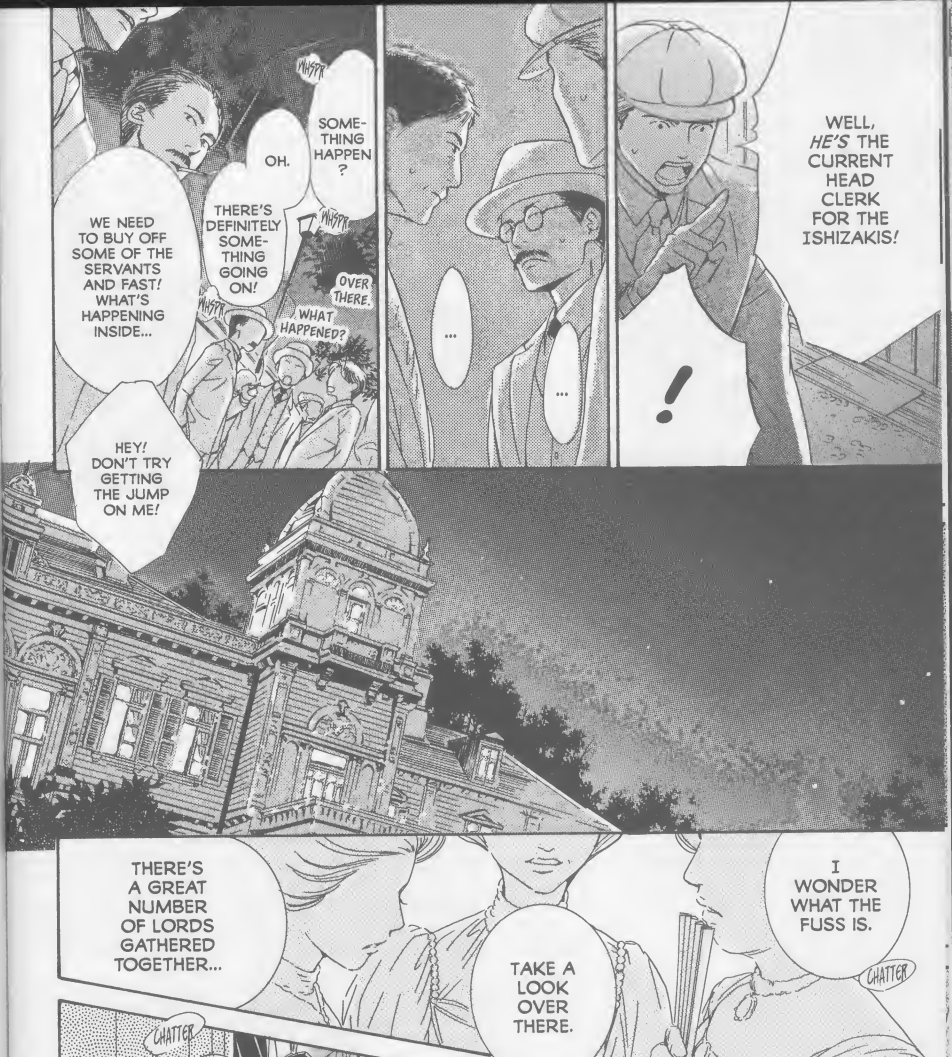

...I WILL HAVE TO...
...DECEIVE MASTER AKIHITO AGAIN.
SOICHIRO.
WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE MATTER?
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK

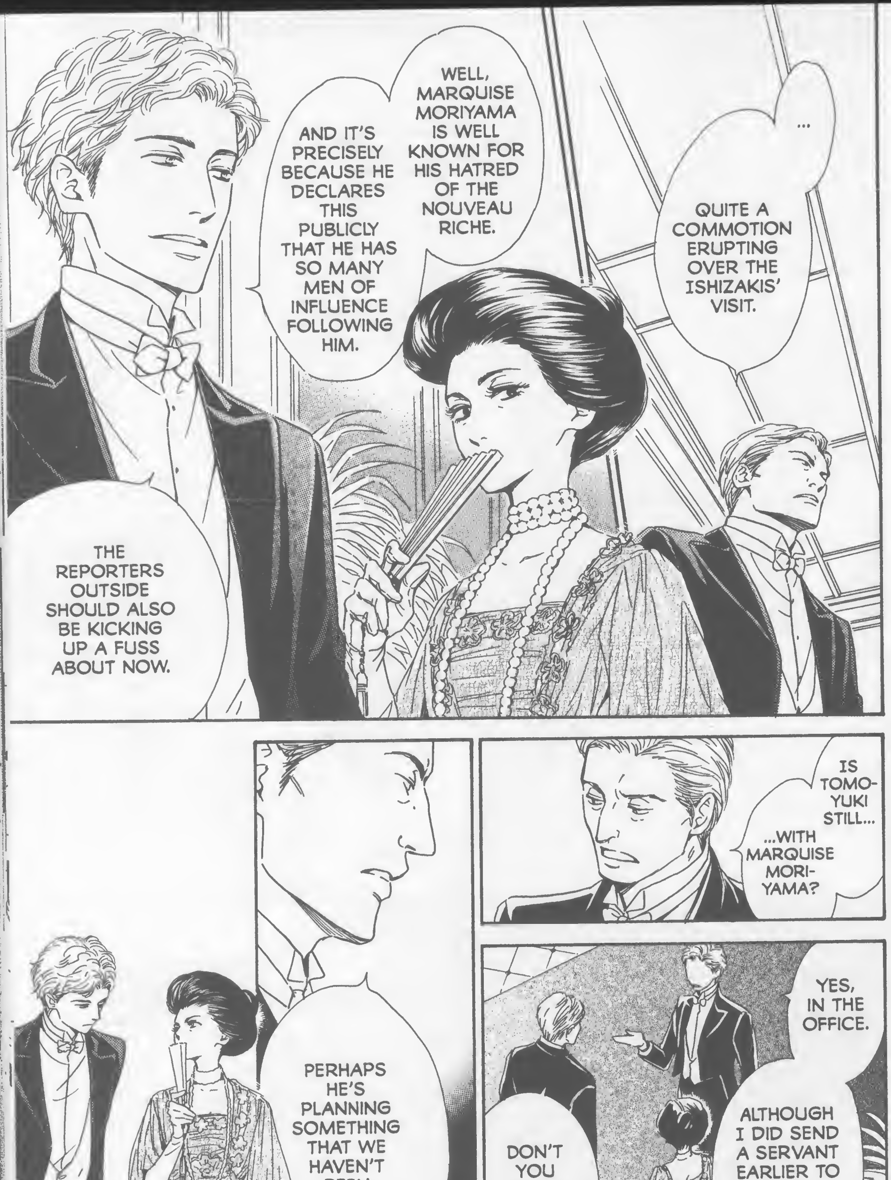

YOU TOLD ME NOT TO THROW AKIHITO KUZE ASIDE.
YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO HELP YOUR FRIEND.
...
KLAK KLAK
BUT THINK HARD ON THIS.
THE PROMOTION OF THE KUZE HOUSE AND THE GRANTING OF TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI'S PEERAGE... THE ONE WHO WANTS THESE THINGS IS NONE OTHER THAN AKIHITO HIMSELF.
DO YOU THINK HE WANTS MY HELP AT THIS STAGE?
...
YOU'RE PROBABLY GOING TO HIT ME AGAIN...
YOU TOLD ME TO KEEP OUT OF IT...
GRAH!
SIGH
THIS IS ABSURD!
THINK THIS THROUGH YOURSELF! RIGHT NOW!
KLAK
...
I'M AGAINST WHAT KUZE WANTS TO DO.
WHY?
KLAK

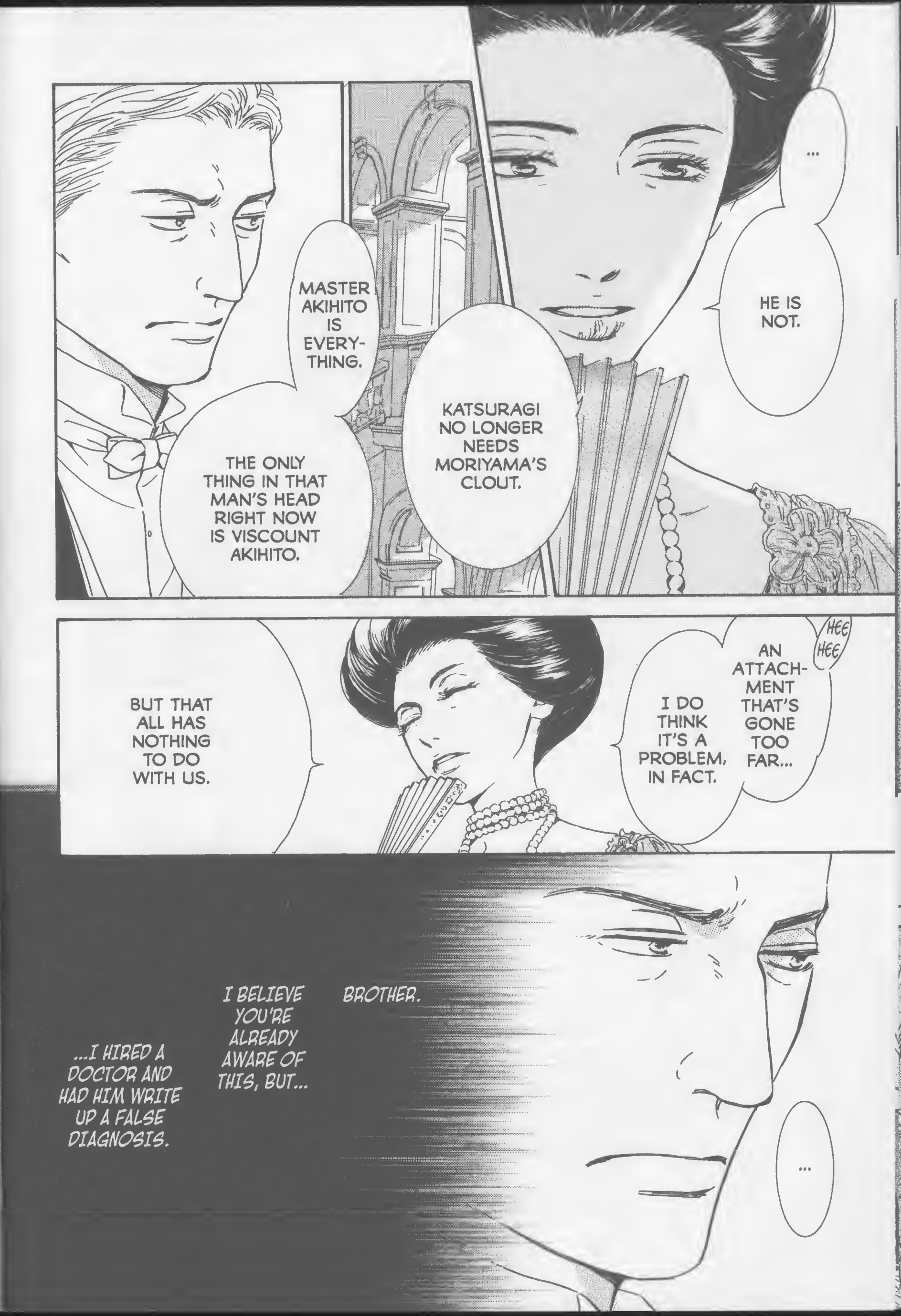

...
BECAUSE I THINK...
...TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI IS NOT WORTH AKIHITO KUZE SACRIFICING EVERYTHING.
KATSURAGI IS JUST A BASE...
...ORDINARY MAN.
KLAK KLAK KLAK
HE'S NOT THE STRONG FIGURE KUZE THINKS HE IS.
THE PERSON WHO SHOULD BE THE HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE IS AKIHITO KUZE.
I'M CERTAIN OF IT.

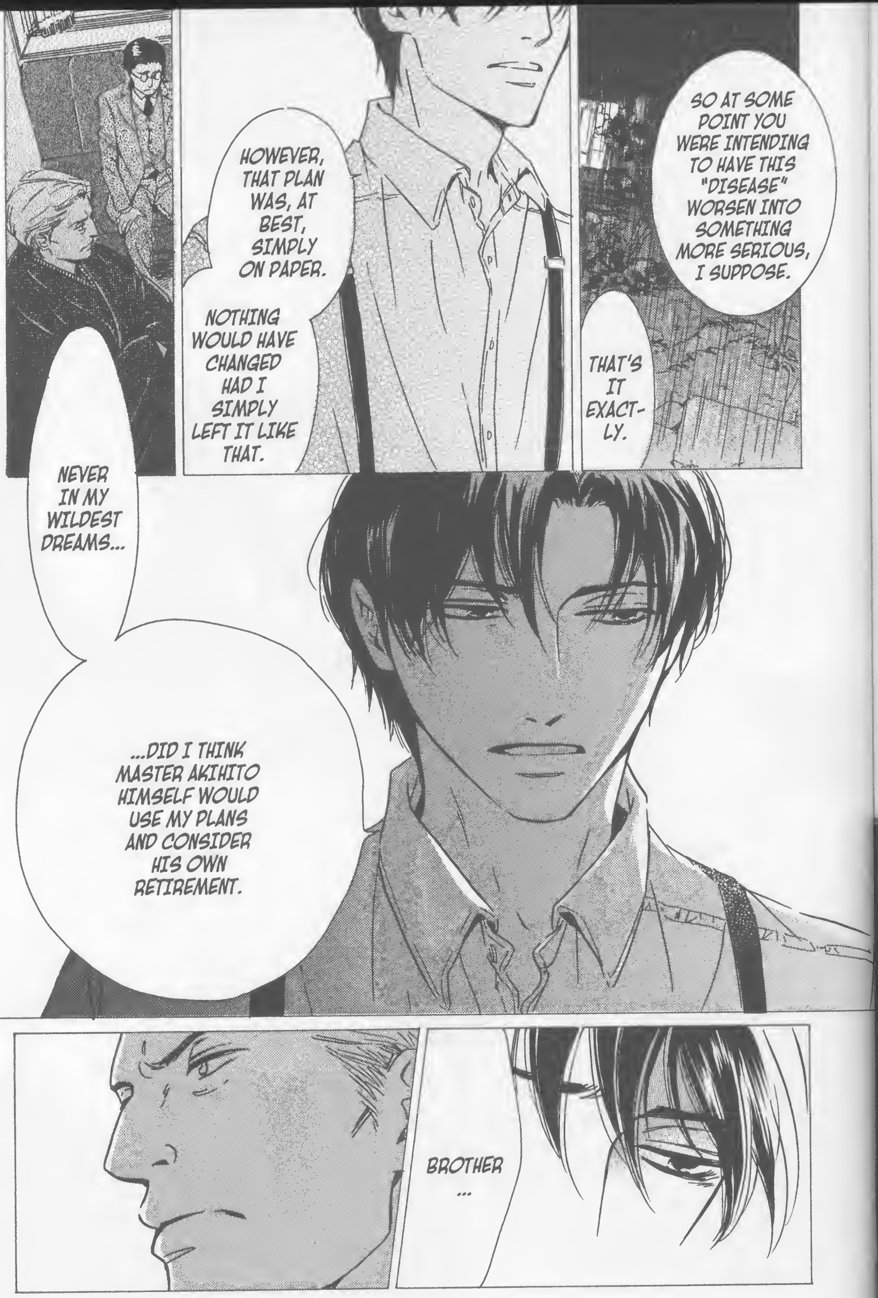

YOU DON'T KNOW THE PAST. YOU'RE NOT HINDERED BY IT.
SOICHIRO.
WHICH IS PROBABLY WHY YOU CAN SEE RIGHT TO THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER.
HUH?
THE KUZE HOUSE IS A TROUBLED ONE.
IT ALL STARTED WITH THE FORMER VISCOUNT AKINAO AND HIS FATHER NAOYA.
THE CONNECTIONS ARE TOO DEEP...
MY OWN INCLUDED.
...
AT ANY RATE.
FOR THE PRESENT, WHAT I WANT IS TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI.
IT WOULD BE A PROBLEM IF HE WERE TO RETURN TO THE KUZE HOUSE NOW.
KLAK KLAK
KLAK

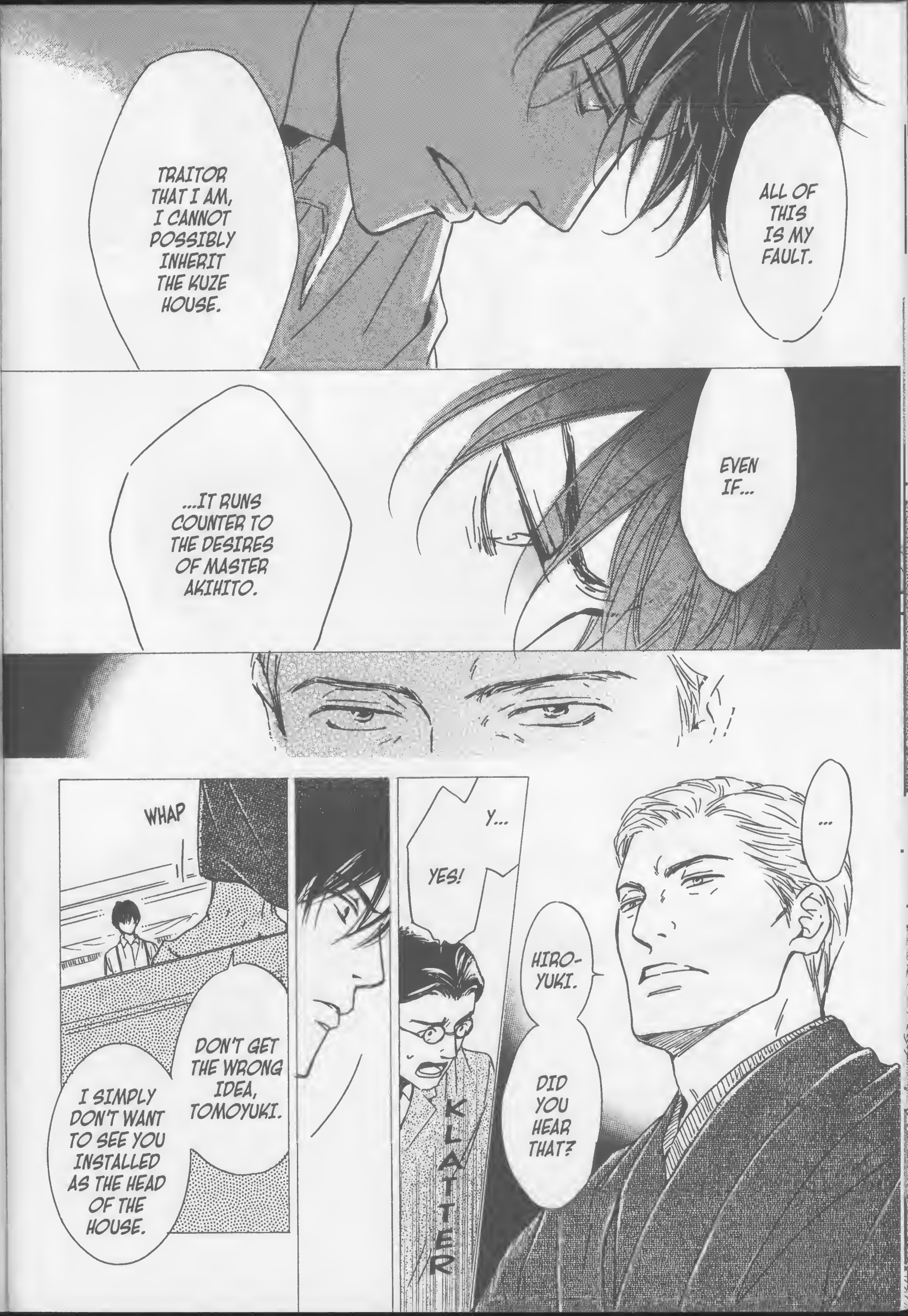

I'D RATHER HAVE AKIHITO BE HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
KATSURAGI WILL BE EASIER TO MANAGE THAT WAY.
...
DOES THAT MEAN YOU'LL HELP KUZE FOR ME?
THAT'LL BE THE END RESULT.
THE END RESULT?
KLAK KLAK
HEY!
HEY! LOOK!
SMACK SMACK
OW!
IT'S THE ISHIZAKIS' CARRIAGE!
WHAT?!
WHOA, WHOA, WHOA! WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THAT?
MARQUISE MORIYAMA HATES THE NOUVEAU RICHE, DOESN'T HE?
HE'S BEEN PARTICULAR ABOUT KEEPING HIS DISTANCE FROM PLUTOCRATS LIKE THE ISHIZAKIS.
KLAK KLAK KLAK
MARQUISE MORIYAMA HATES MERCHANTS?
STRANGE. HIS WIFE COMES FROM A MERCHANT FAMILY.
LOOK, YOU.
IT'S BECAUSE THEY'RE THE SAME. IT'S A LITTLE THING CALLED SELF-HATRED!
!
THAT MUST BE IT! TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI. HE SHOWED UP EARLIER, RIGHT?

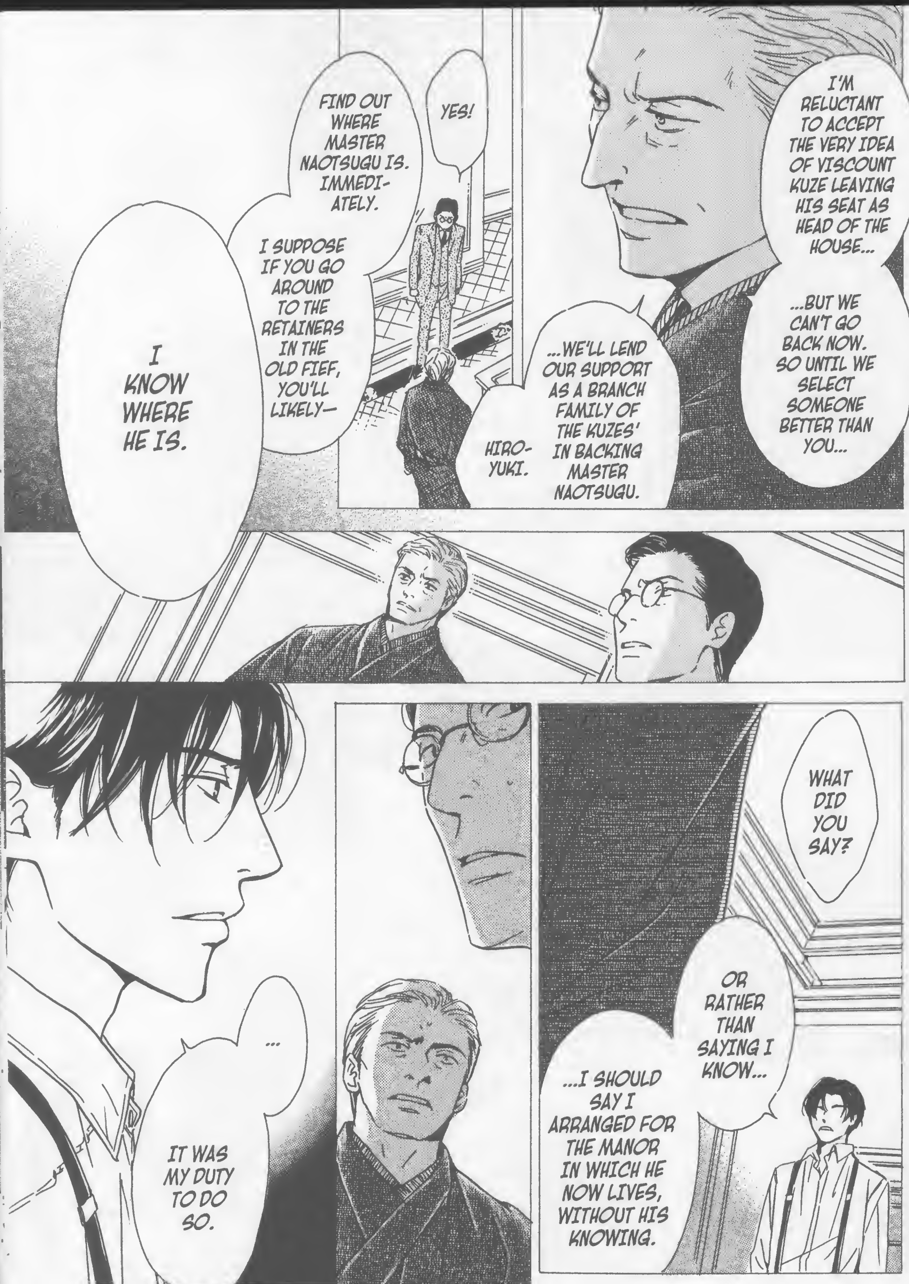

WELL, *HE'S* THE CURRENT HEAD CLERK FOR THE ISHIZAKIS!
!
...
...
SOMETHING HAPPEN?
WHSPR
OH.
THERE'S DEFINITELY SOMETHING GOING ON!
WHSPR
WE NEED TO BUY OFF SOME OF THE SERVANTS AND FAST! WHAT'S HAPPENING INSIDE...
OVER THERE.
WHAT HAPPENED?
WHSPR
HEY! DON'T TRY GETTING THE JUMP ON ME!
I WONDER WHAT THE FUSS IS.
CHATTER
TAKE A LOOK OVER THERE.
THERE'S A GREAT NUMBER OF LORDS GATHERED TOGETHER...
CHATTER
INFORM HIS EXCELLENCY.
CHATTER
DID YOU HEAR?
A RIDICULOUSLY SHOWY CARRIAGE OUTSIDE...
CHATTER

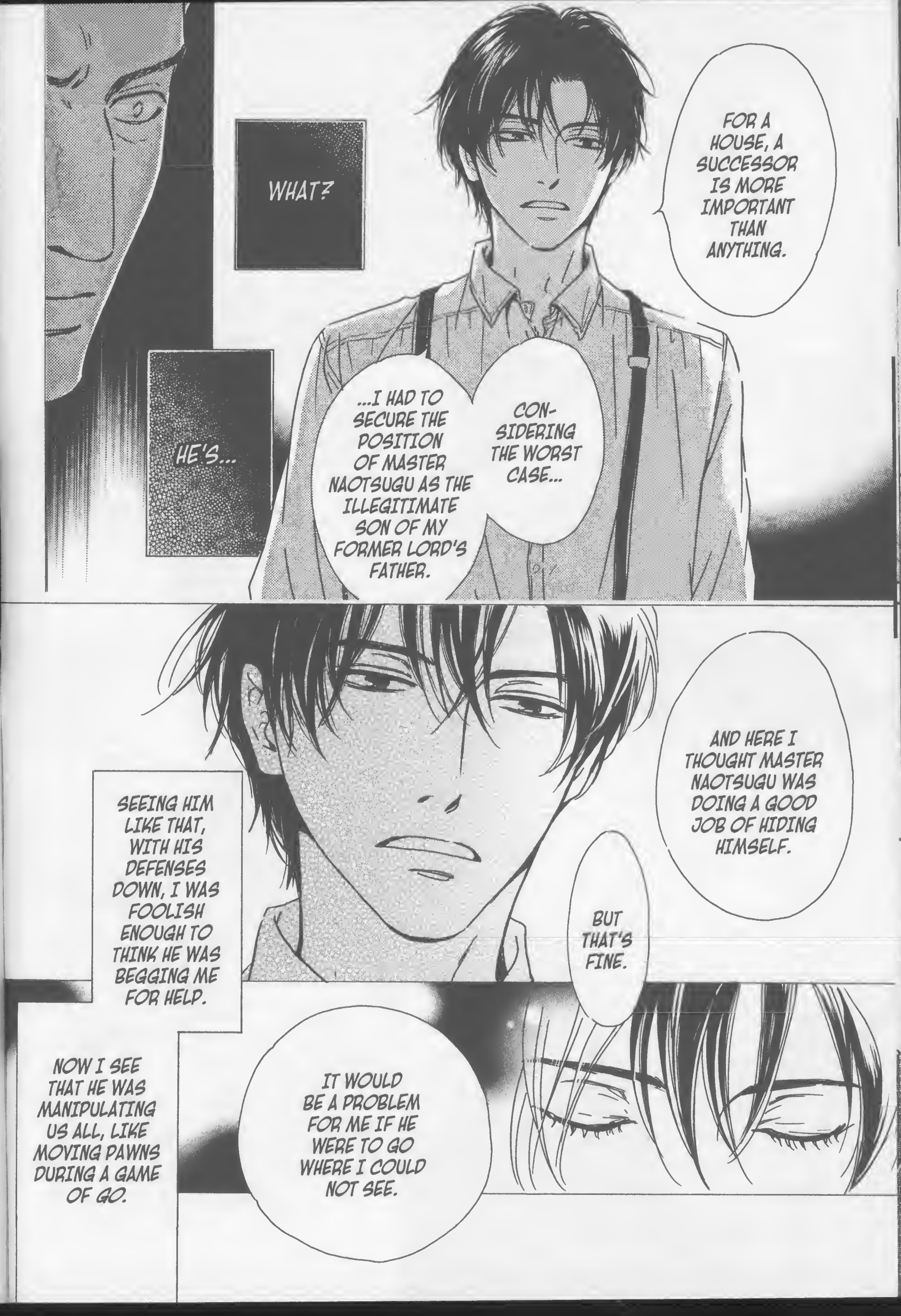

...
QUITE A COMMOTION ERUPTING OVER THE ISHIZAKIS' VISIT.
WELL, MARQUISE MORIYAMA IS WELL KNOWN FOR HIS HATRED OF THE NOUVEAU RICHE.
AND IT'S PRECISELY BECAUSE HE DECLARES THIS PUBLICLY THAT HE HAS SO MANY MEN OF INFLUENCE FOLLOWING HIM.
THE REPORTERS OUTSIDE SHOULD ALSO BE KICKING UP A FUSS ABOUT NOW.
IS TOMOYUKI STILL...
...WITH MARQUISE MORIYAMA?
YES, IN THE OFFICE.
ALTHOUGH I DID SEND A SERVANT EARLIER TO INFORM HIM OF HIS GUEST.
DON'T YOU THINK IT'S TOO LATE?
PERHAPS HE'S PLANNING SOMETHING THAT WE HAVEN'T BEEN INFORMED OF?

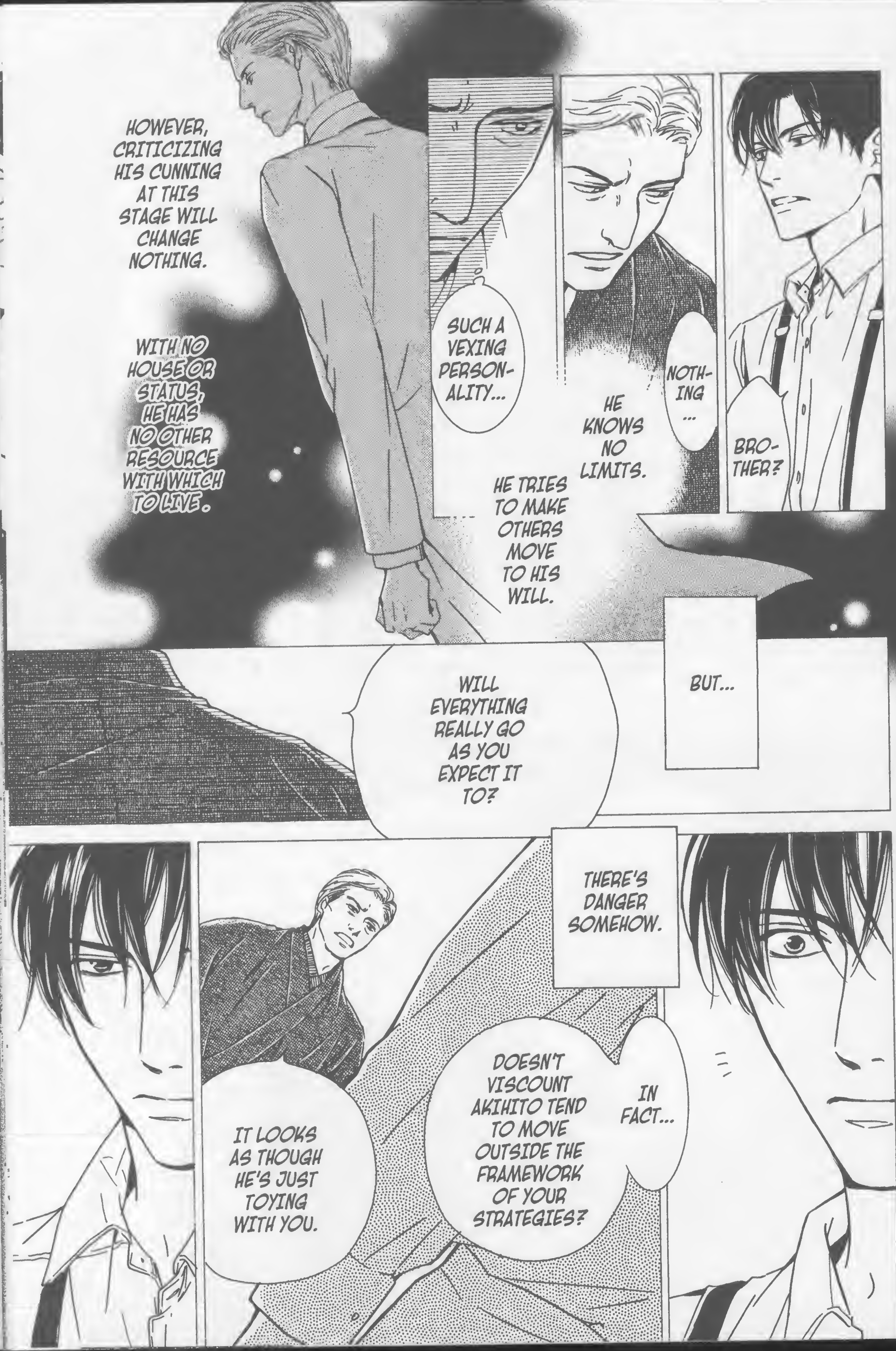

...
HE IS NOT.
KATSURAGI NO LONGER NEEDS MORIYAMA'S CLOUT.
MASTER AKIHITO IS EVERYTHING.
THE ONLY THING IN THAT MAN'S HEAD RIGHT NOW IS VISCOUNT AKIHITO.
HEE HEE
AN ATTACHMENT THAT'S GONE TOO FAR...
I DO THINK IT'S A PROBLEM, IN FACT.
BUT THAT ALL HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH US.
...
BROTHER.
I BELIEVE YOU'RE ALREADY AWARE OF THIS, BUT...
...I HIRED A DOCTOR AND HAD HIM WRITE UP A FALSE DIAGNOSIS.

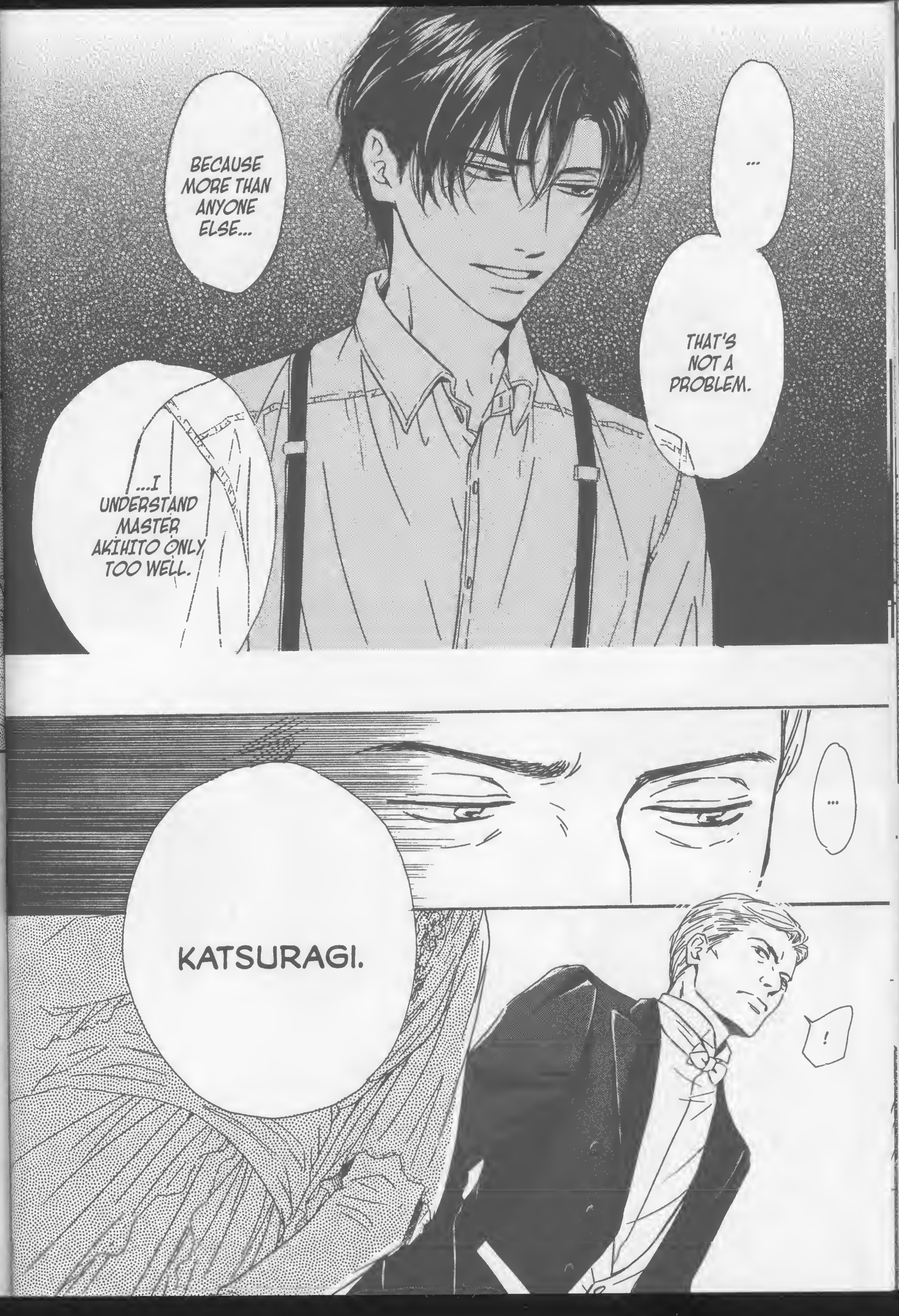

SO AT SOME POINT YOU WERE INTENDING TO HAVE THIS "DISEASE" WORSEN INTO SOMETHING MORE SERIOUS, I SUPPOSE.
THAT'S IT EXACTLY.
HOWEVER, THAT PLAN WAS, AT BEST, SIMPLY ON PAPER.
NOTHING WOULD HAVE CHANGED HAD I SIMPLY LEFT IT LIKE THAT.
NEVER IN MY WILDEST DREAMS...
...DID I THINK MASTER AKIHITO HIMSELF WOULD USE MY PLANS AND CONSIDER HIS OWN RETIREMENT.
BROTHER...

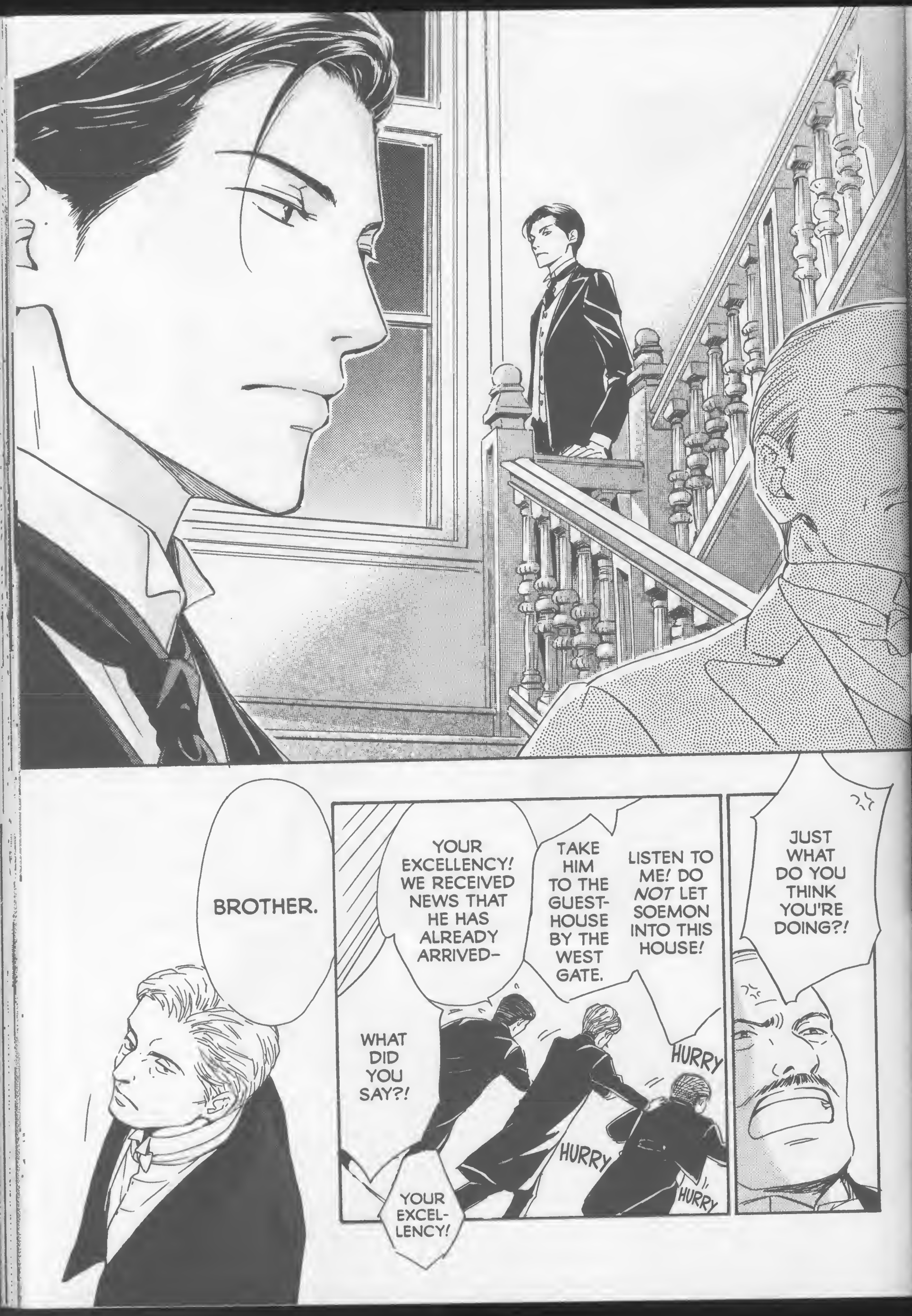

ALL OF THIS IS MY FAULT.
TRAITOR THAT I AM, I CANNOT POSSIBLY INHERIT THE KUZE HOUSE.
EVEN IF...
...IT RUNS COUNTER TO THE DESIRES OF MASTER AKIHITO.
...
HIRO-YUKI.
DID YOU HEAR THAT?
Y...
YES!
KLATTER
WHAP
DON'T GET THE WRONG IDEA, TOMOYUKI.
I SIMPLY DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU INSTALLED AS THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE.

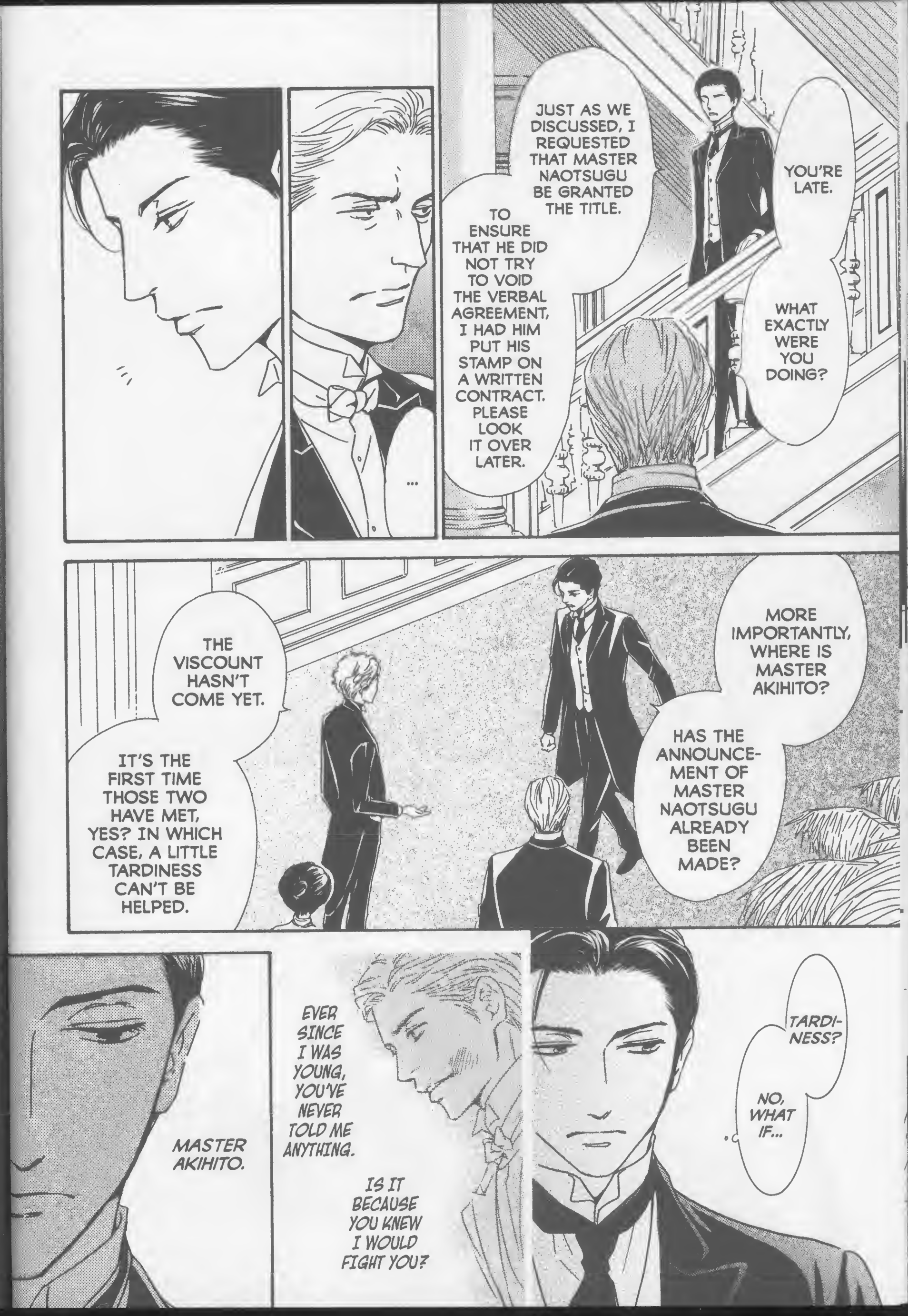

I'M RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT THE VERY IDEA OF VISCOUNT KUZE LEAVING HIS SEAT AS HEAD OF THE HOUSE...
...BUT WE CAN'T GO BACK NOW. SO UNTIL WE SELECT SOMEONE BETTER THAN YOU...
...WE'LL LEND OUR SUPPORT AS A BRANCH FAMILY OF THE KUZES' IN BACKING MASTER NAOTSUGU.
HIRO-YUKI.
YES!
FIND OUT WHERE MASTER NAOTSUGU IS. IMMEDIATELY.
I SUPPOSE IF YOU GO AROUND TO THE RETAINERS IN THE OLD FIEF, YOU'LL LIKELY—
I KNOW WHERE HE IS.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
OR RATHER THAN SAYING I KNOW...
...I SHOULD SAY I ARRANGED FOR THE MANOR IN WHICH HE NOW LIVES, WITHOUT HIS KNOWING.
...
IT WAS MY DUTY TO DO SO.

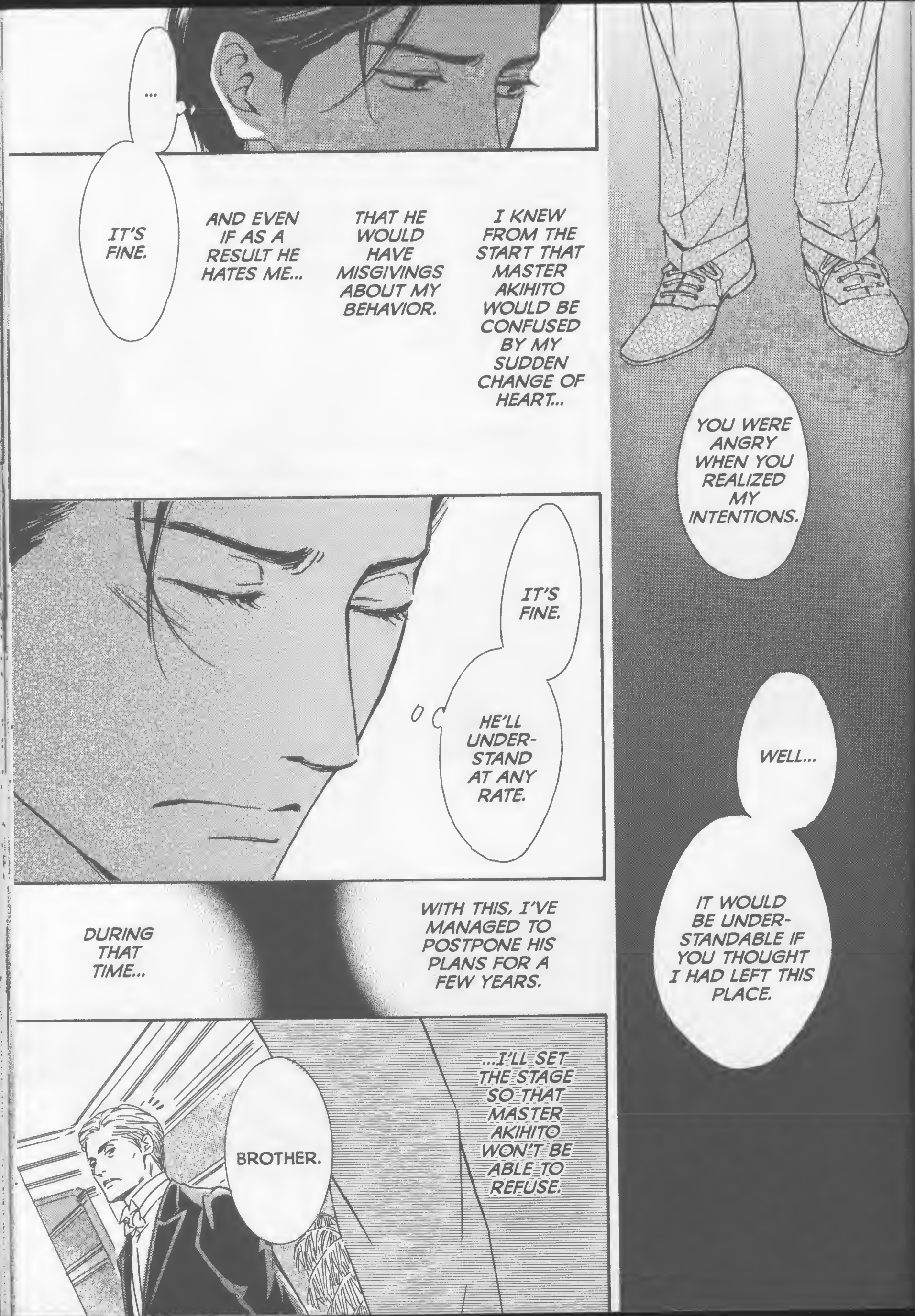

FOR A HOUSE, A SUCCESSOR IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANYTHING.
WHAT?
CONSIDERING THE WORST CASE...
...I HAD TO SECURE THE POSITION OF MASTER NAOTSUGU AS THE ILLEGITIMATE SON OF MY FORMER LORD'S FATHER.
HE'S...
AND HERE I THOUGHT MASTER NAOTSUGU WAS DOING A GOOD JOB OF HIDING HIMSELF.
SEEING HIM LIKE THAT, WITH HIS DEFENSES DOWN, I WAS FOOLISH ENOUGH TO THINK HE WAS BEGGING ME FOR HELP.
BUT THAT'S FINE.
IT WOULD BE A PROBLEM FOR ME IF HE WERE TO GO WHERE I COULD NOT SEE.
NOW I SEE THAT HE WAS MANIPULATING US ALL, LIKE MOVING PAWNS DURING A GAME OF GO.

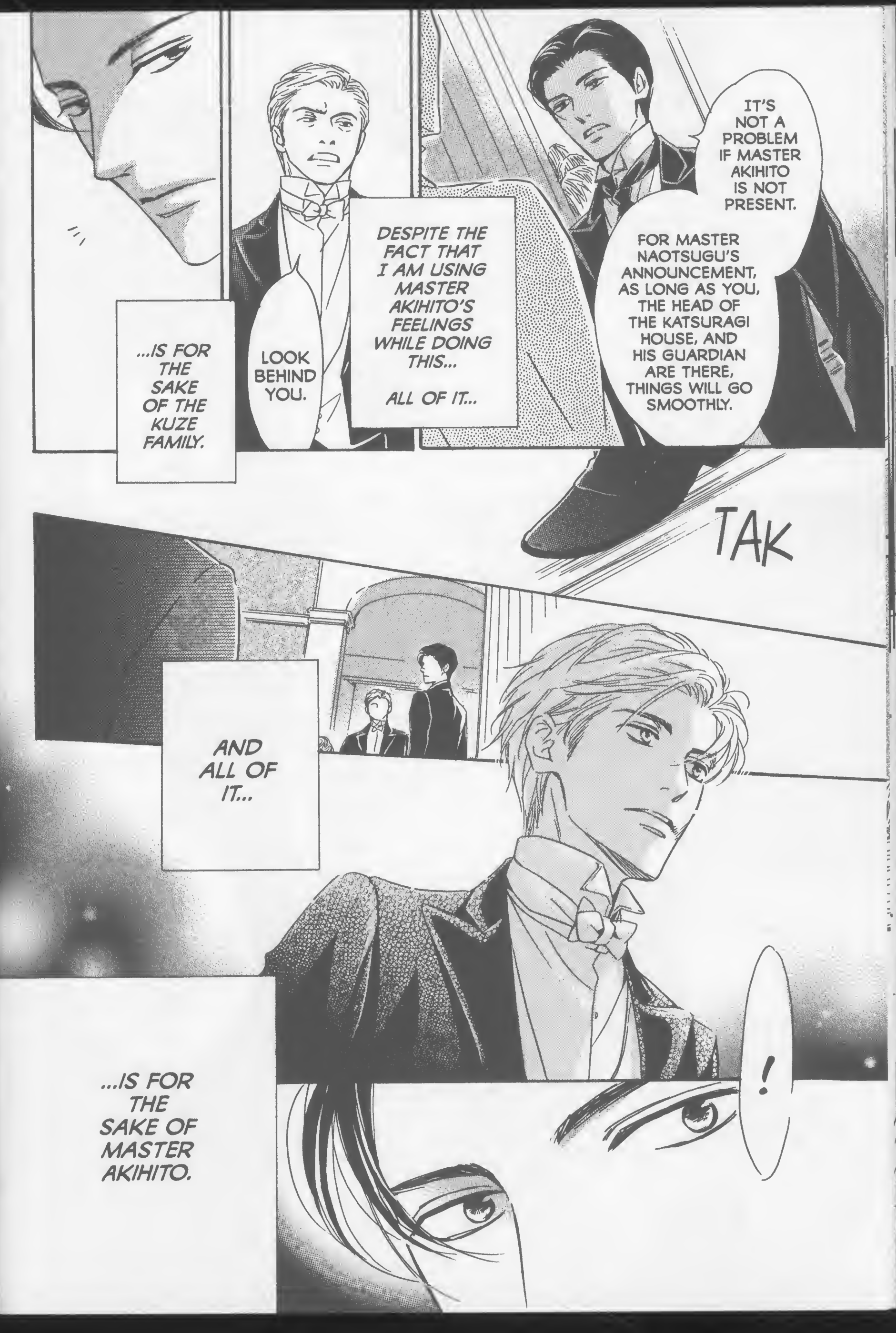

BROTHER?
NOTHING...
HE KNOWS NO LIMITS.
SUCH A VEXING PERSONALITY...
HE TRIES TO MAKE OTHERS MOVE TO HIS WILL.
HOWEVER, CRITICIZING HIS CUNNING AT THIS STAGE WILL CHANGE NOTHING.
WITH NO HOUSE OR STATUS, HE HAS NO OTHER RESOURCE WITH WHICH TO LIVE.
BUT...
WILL EVERYTHING REALLY GO AS YOU EXPECT IT TO?
THERE'S DANGER SOMEHOW.
IN FACT...
DOESN'T VISCOUNT AKIHITO TEND TO MOVE OUTSIDE THE FRAMEWORK OF YOUR STRATEGIES?
IT LOOKS AS THOUGH HE'S JUST TOYING WITH YOU.

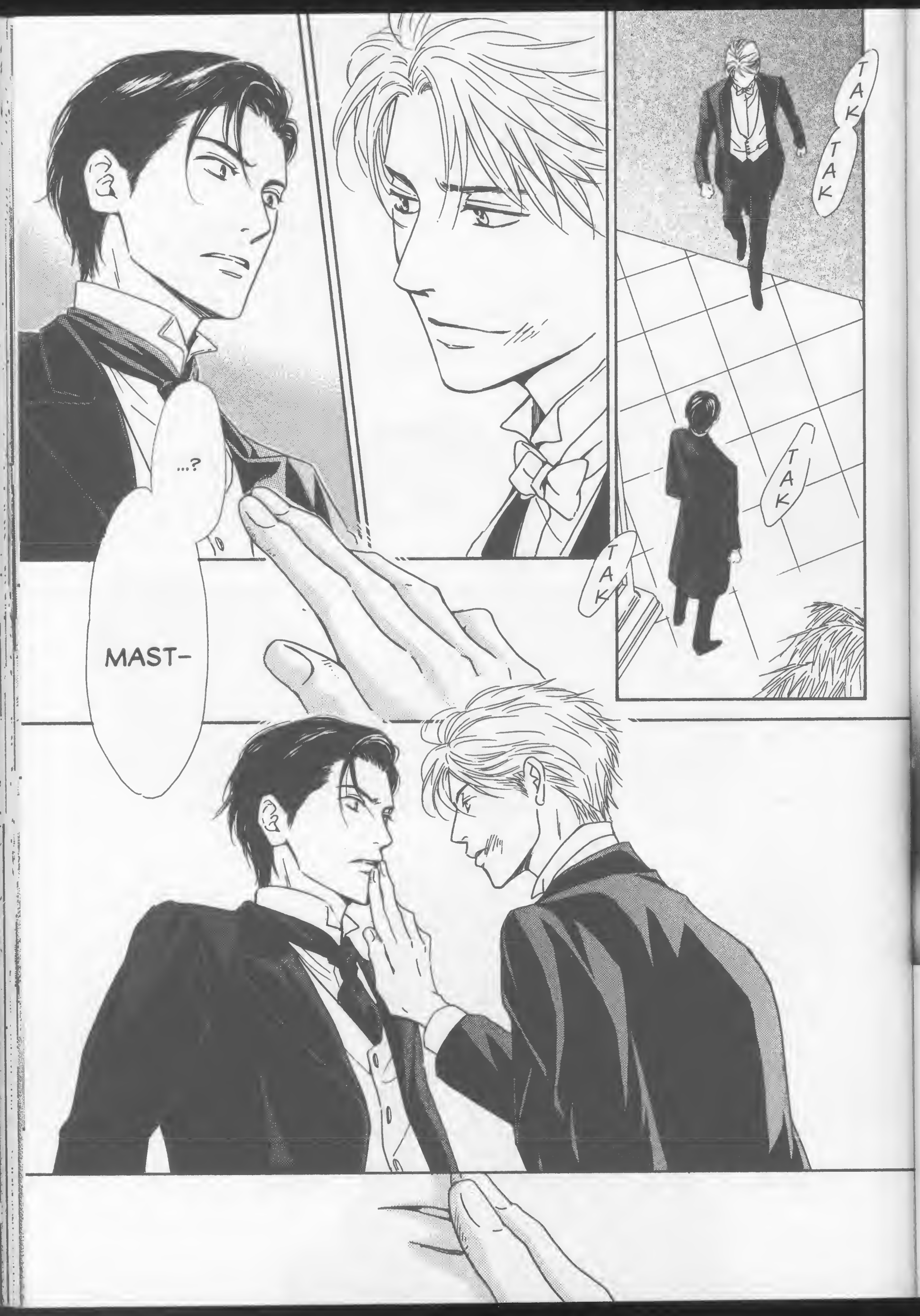

...
THAT'S NOT A PROBLEM.
BECAUSE MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE...
...I UNDERSTAND MASTER AKIHITO ONLY TOO WELL.
...
KATSURAGI.
!

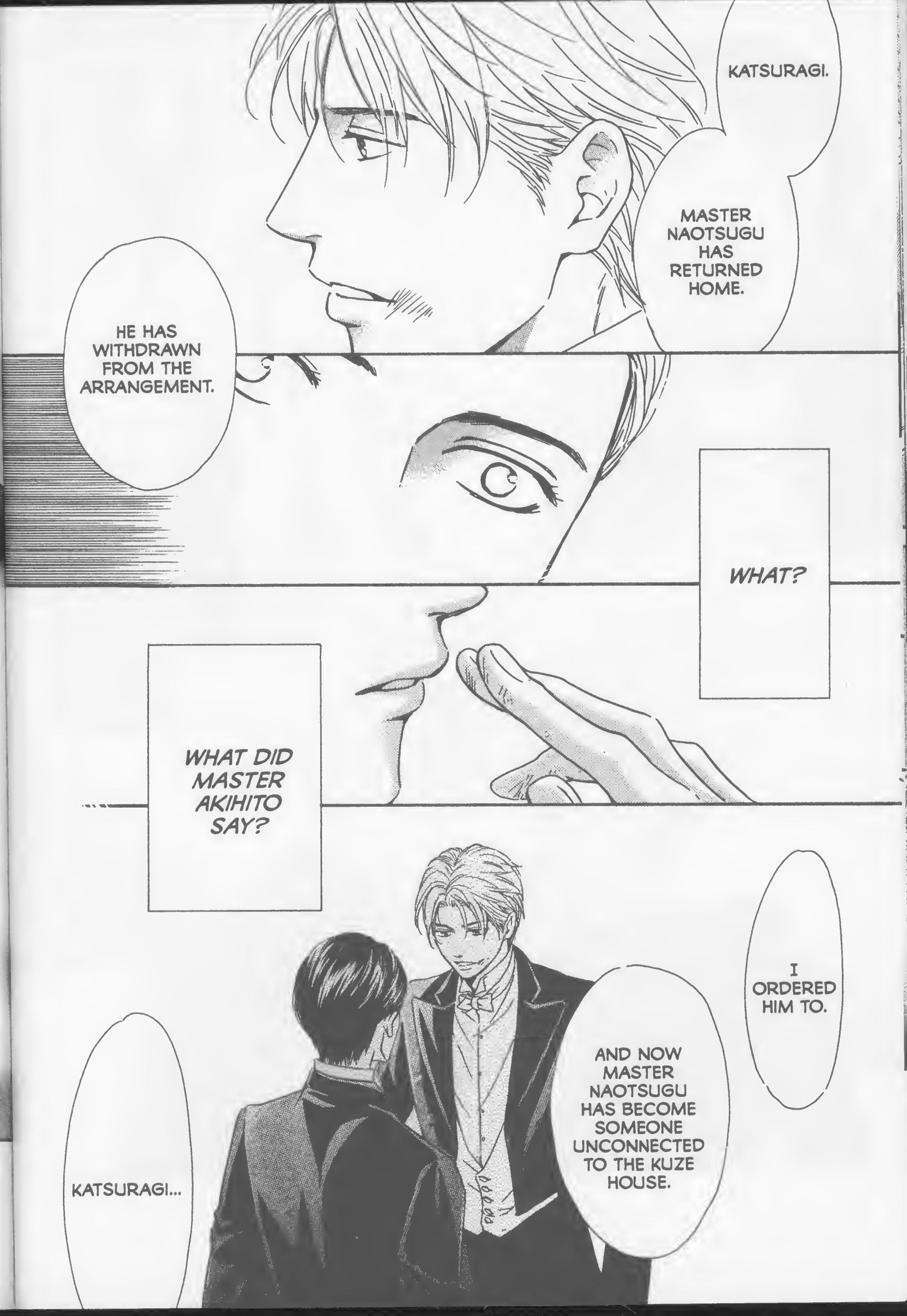

JUST WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
LISTEN TO ME! DO *NOT* LET SOEMON INTO THIS HOUSE!
TAKE HIM TO THE GUESTHOUSE BY THE WEST GATE.
YOUR EXCELLENCY! WE RECEIVED NEWS THAT HE HAS ALREADY ARRIVED–
HURRY
HURRY
HURRY
WHAT DID YOU SAY?!
YOUR EXCELLENCY!
BROTHER.

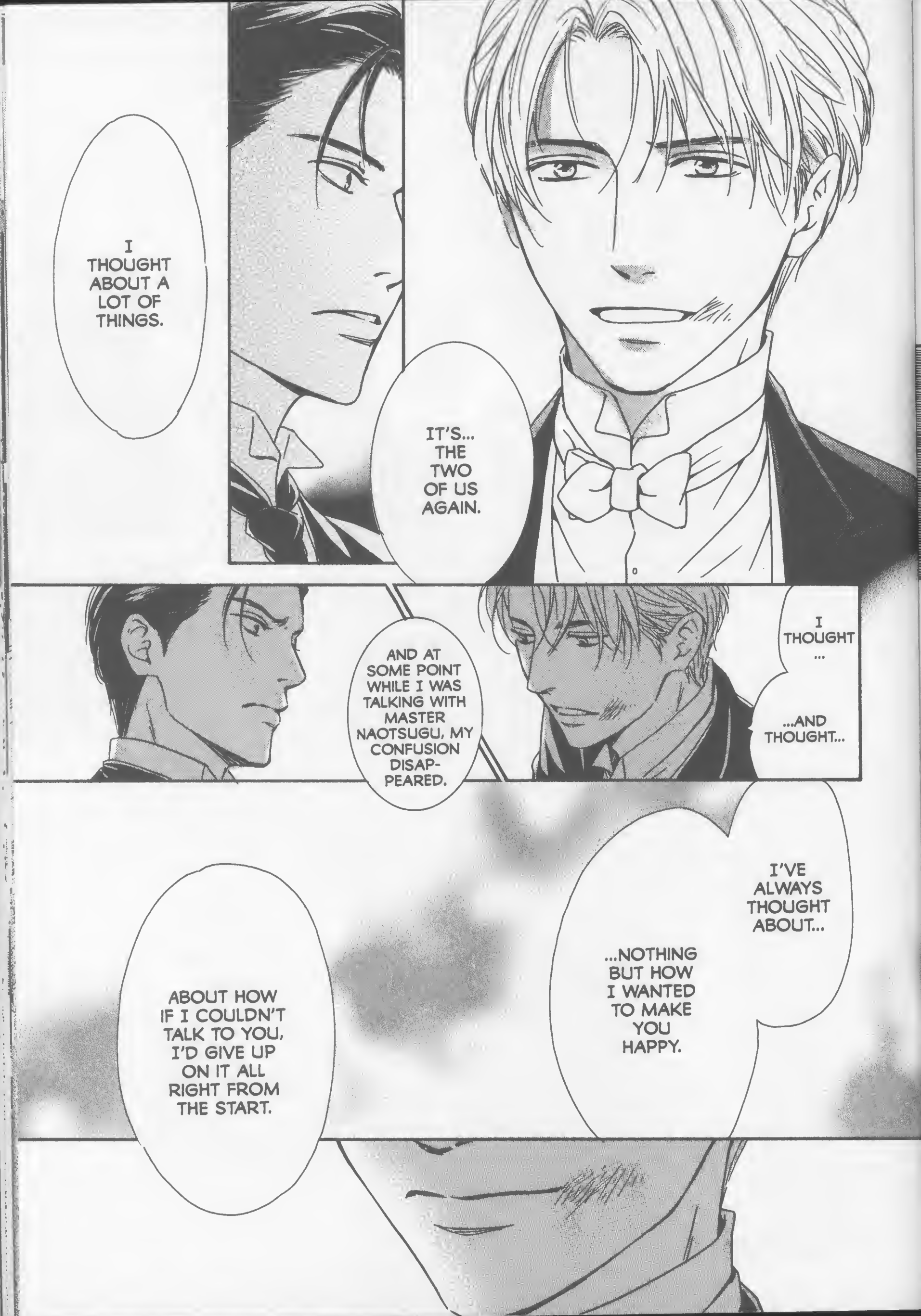

YOU'RE LATE.
WHAT EXACTLY WERE YOU DOING?
JUST AS WE DISCUSSED, I REQUESTED THAT MASTER NAOTSUGU BE GRANTED THE TITLE.
TO ENSURE THAT HE DID NOT TRY TO VOID THE VERBAL AGREEMENT, I HAD HIM PUT HIS STAMP ON A WRITTEN CONTRACT. PLEASE LOOK IT OVER LATER.
...
MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHERE IS MASTER AKIHITO?
HAS THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF MASTER NAOTSUGU ALREADY BEEN MADE?
THE VISCOUNT HASN'T COME YET.
IT'S THE FIRST TIME THOSE TWO HAVE MET, YES? IN WHICH CASE, A LITTLE TARDINESS CAN'T BE HELPED.
TARDINESS?
NO, WHAT IF...
EVER SINCE I WAS YOUNG, YOU'VE NEVER TOLD ME ANYTHING.
IS IT BECAUSE YOU KNEW I WOULD FIGHT YOU?
MASTER AKIHITO.

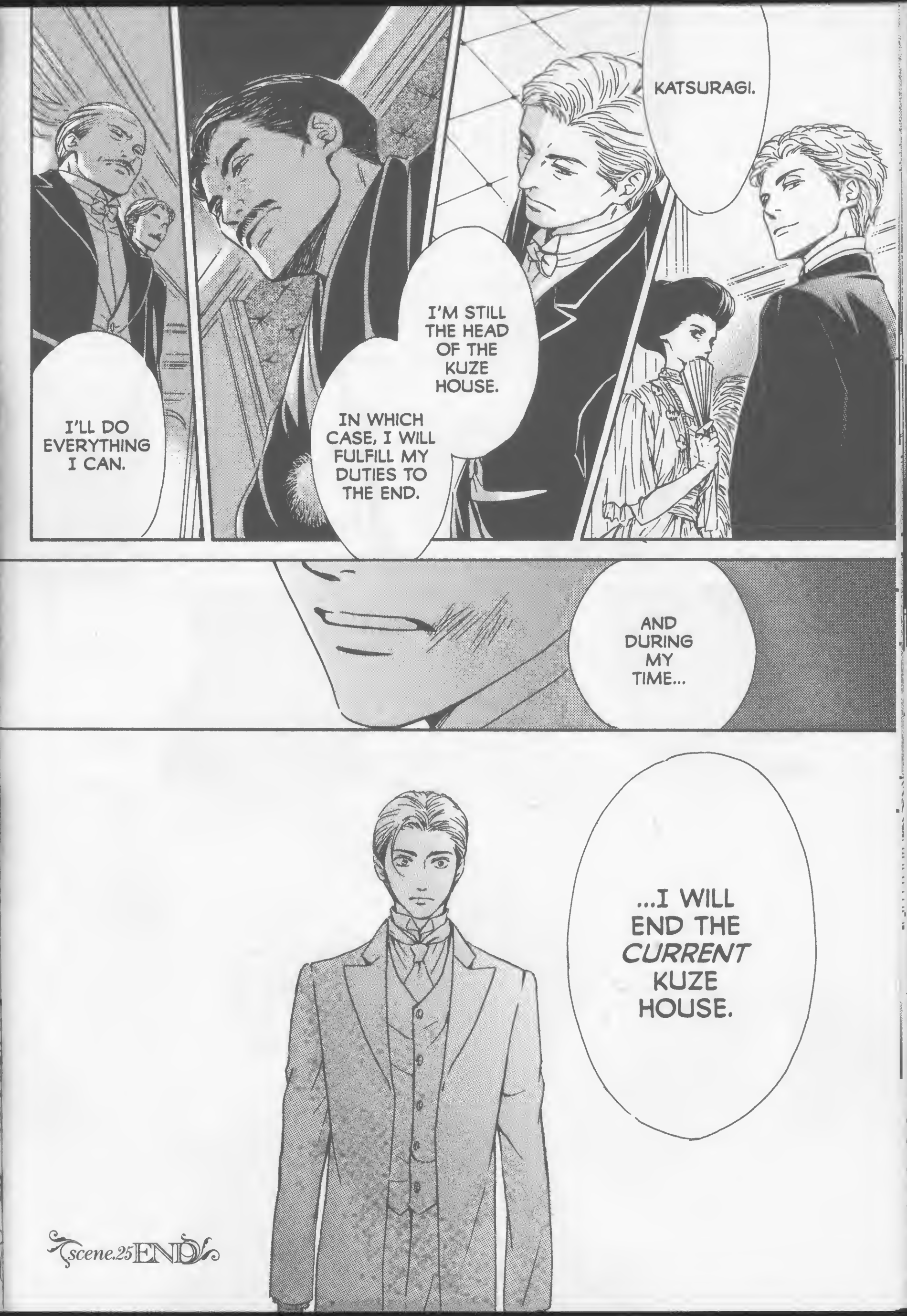

YOU WERE ANGRY WHEN YOU REALIZED MY INTENTIONS.
WELL...
IT WOULD BE UNDERSTANDABLE IF YOU THOUGHT I HAD LEFT THIS PLACE.
...
I KNEW FROM THE START THAT MASTER AKIHITO WOULD BE CONFUSED BY MY SUDDEN CHANGE OF HEART...
THAT HE WOULD HAVE MISGIVINGS ABOUT MY BEHAVIOR.
AND EVEN IF AS A RESULT HE HATES ME...
IT'S FINE.
IT'S FINE.
HE'LL UNDERSTAND AT ANY RATE.
WITH THIS, I'VE MANAGED TO POSTPONE HIS PLANS FOR A FEW YEARS.
DURING THAT TIME...
...I'LL SET THE STAGE SO THAT MASTER AKIHITO WON'T BE ABLE TO REFUSE.
BROTHER.


IT'S NOT A PROBLEM IF MASTER AKIHITO IS NOT PRESENT.
FOR MASTER NAOTSUGU'S ANNOUNCEMENT, AS LONG AS YOU, THE HEAD OF THE KATSURAGI HOUSE, AND HIS GUARDIAN ARE THERE, THINGS WILL GO SMOOTHLY.
DESPITE THE FACT THAT I AM USING MASTER AKIHITO'S FEELINGS WHILE DOING THIS... ALL OF IT...
LOOK BEHIND YOU.
...IS FOR THE SAKE OF THE KUZE FAMILY.
TAK
AND ALL OF IT...
!
...IS FOR THE SAKE OF MASTER AKIHITO.

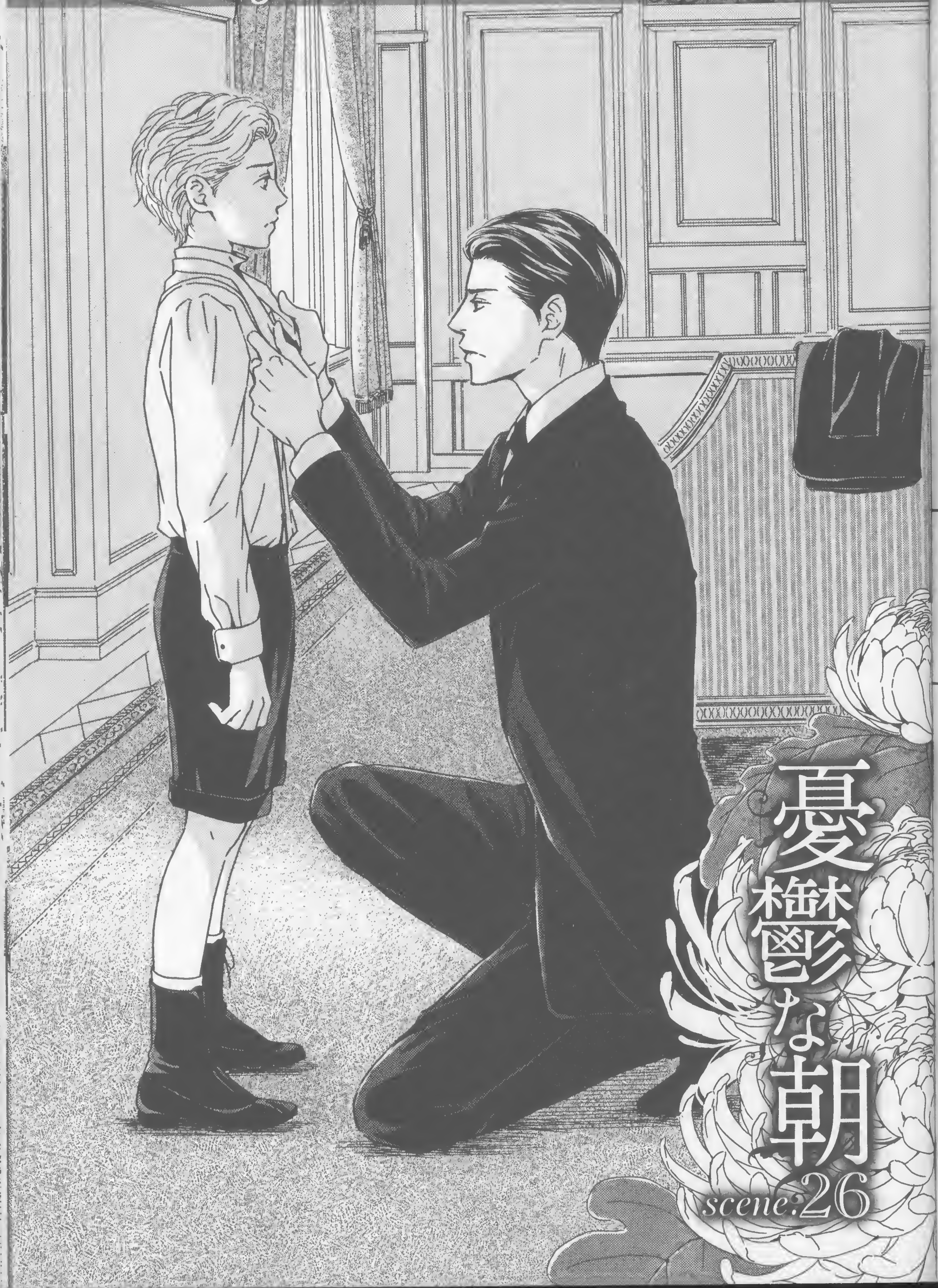

TAK TAK TAK
TAK TAK
TAK
...?
MAST-

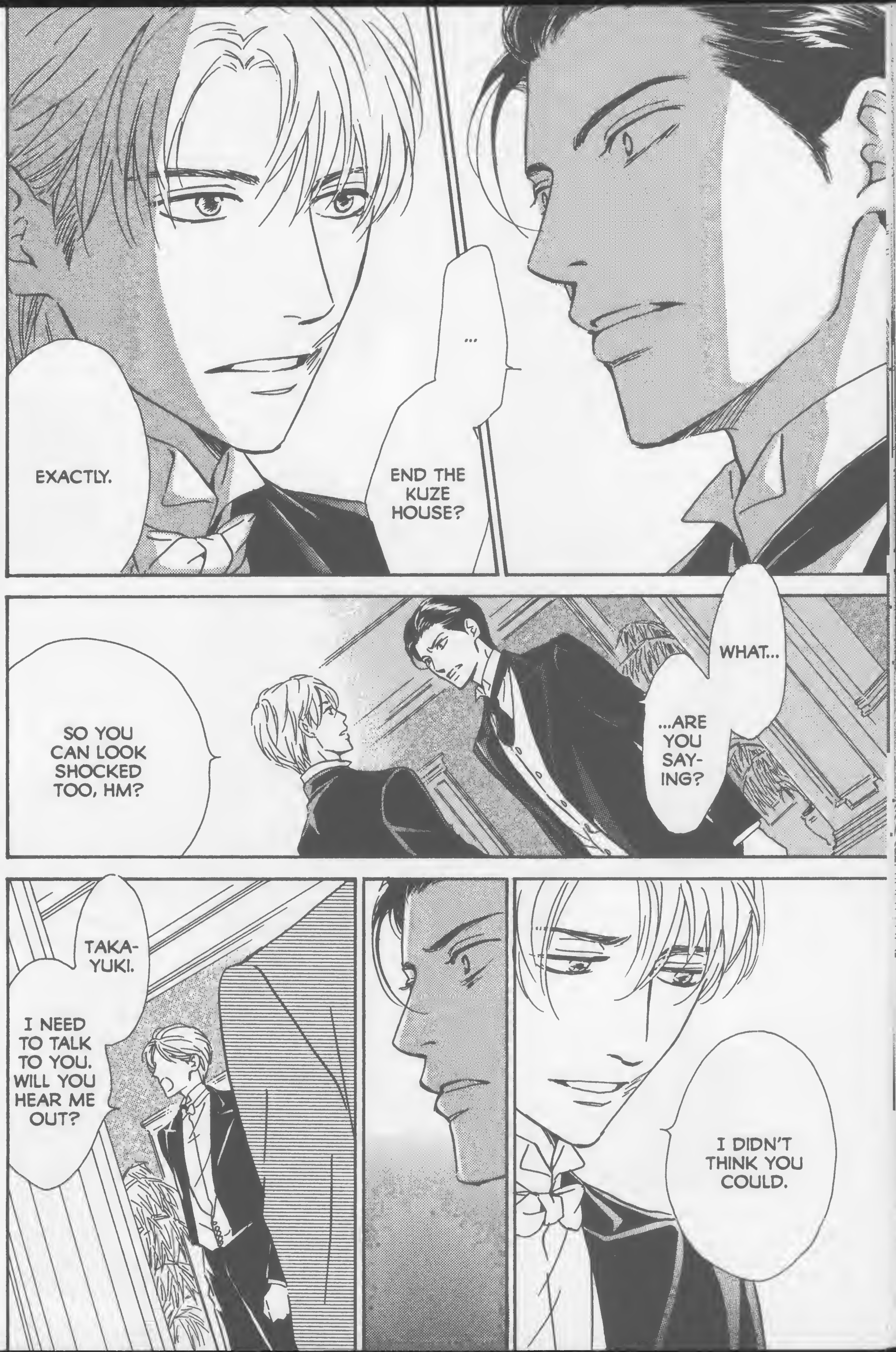

KATSURAGI.
MASTER NAOTSUGU HAS RETURNED HOME.
HE HAS WITHDRAWN FROM THE ARRANGEMENT.
WHAT?
WHAT DID MASTER AKIHITO SAY?
I ORDERED HIM TO.
AND NOW MASTER NAOTSUGU HAS BECOME SOMEONE UNCONNECTED TO THE KUZE HOUSE.
KATSURAGI...

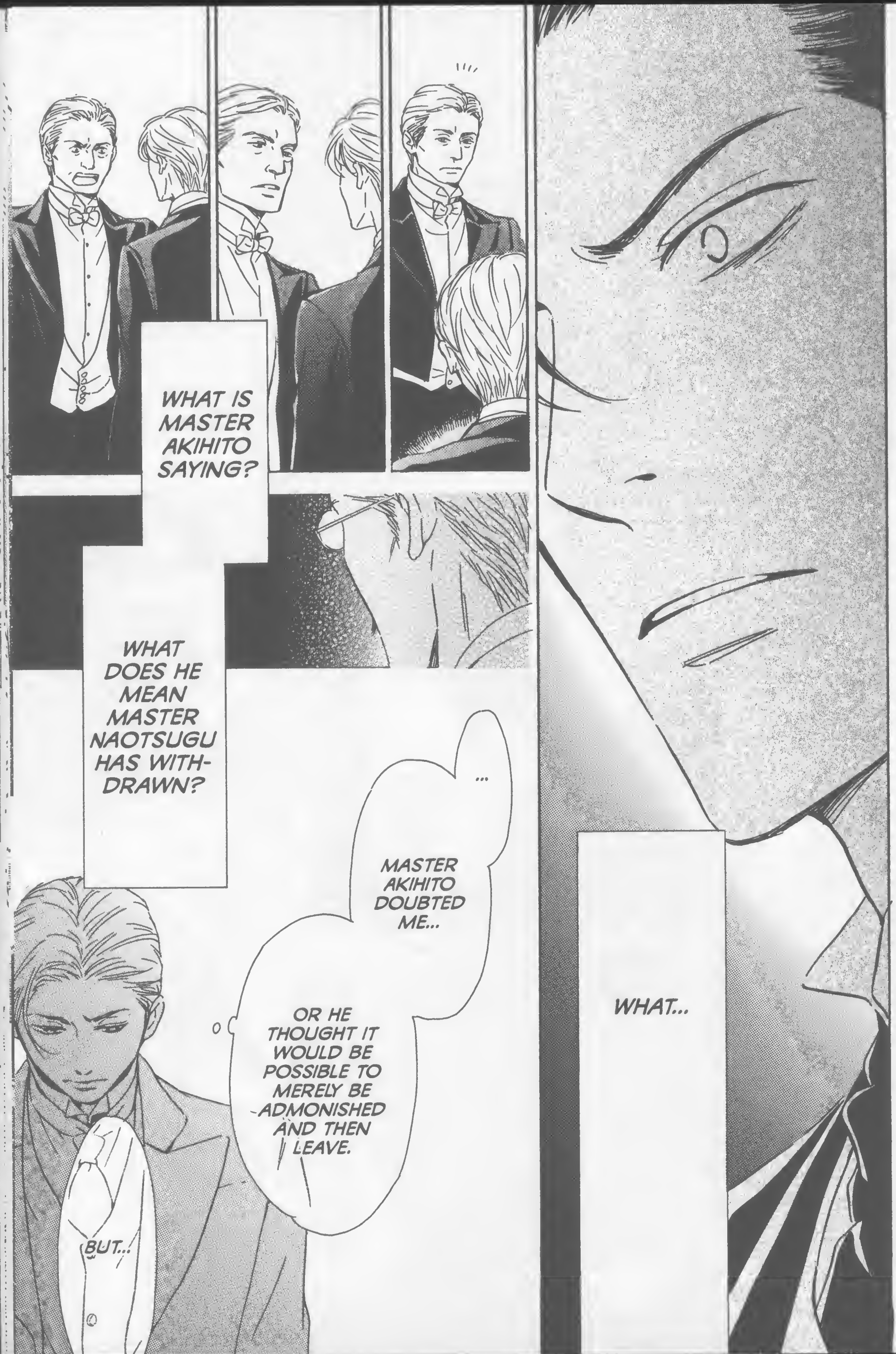

IT'S... THE TWO OF US AGAIN.
I THOUGHT ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS.
I THOUGHT ... ...AND THOUGHT...
AND AT SOME POINT WHILE I WAS TALKING WITH MASTER NAOTSUGU, MY CONFUSION DISAPPEARED.
I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT ABOUT...
...NOTHING BUT HOW I WANTED TO MAKE YOU HAPPY.
ABOUT HOW IF I COULDN'T TALK TO YOU, I'D GIVE UP ON IT ALL RIGHT FROM THE START.

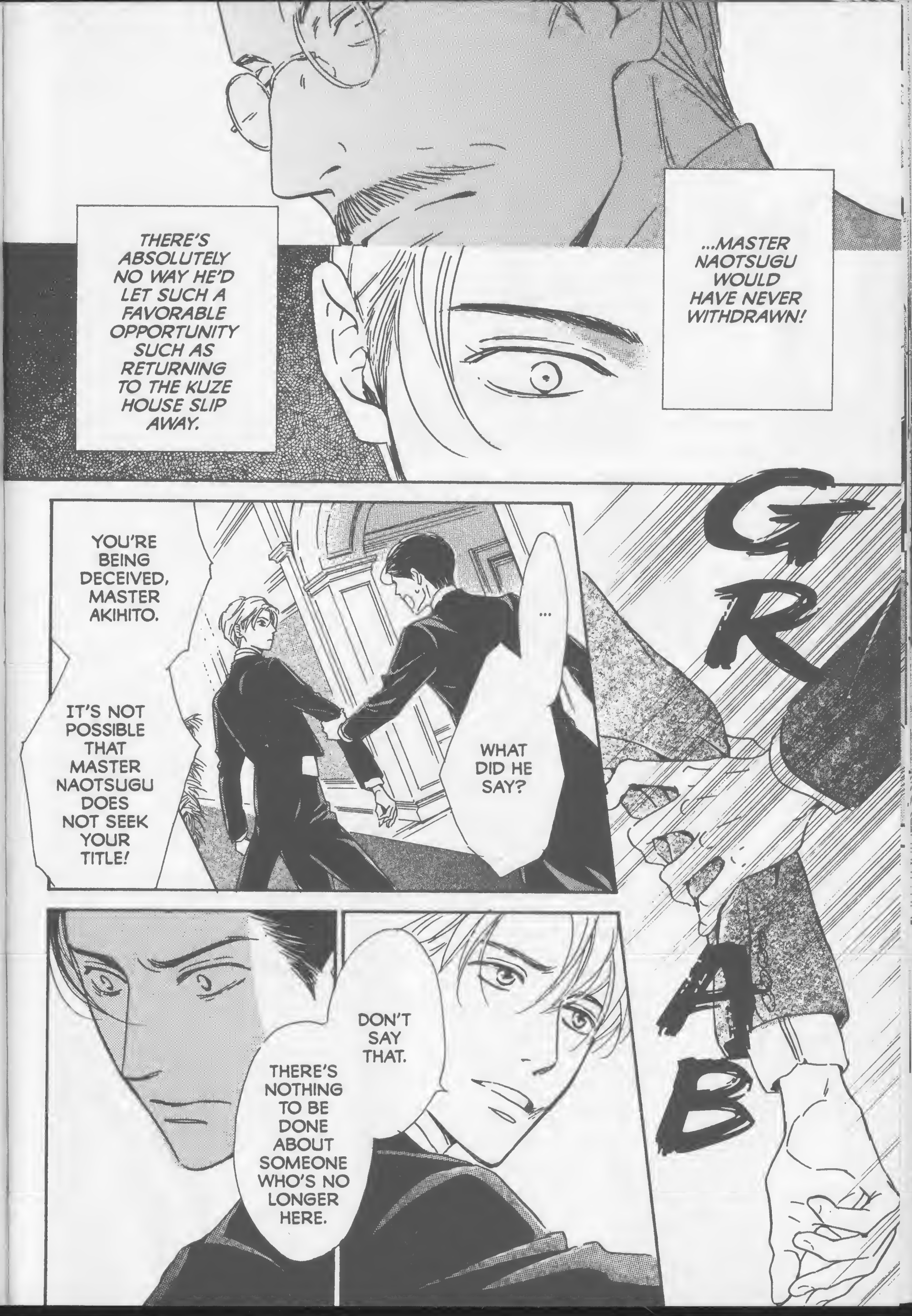

KATSURAGI.
I'M STILL THE HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
IN WHICH CASE, I WILL FULFILL MY DUTIES TO THE END.
I'LL DO EVERYTHING I CAN.
AND DURING MY TIME...
...I WILL END THE *CURRENT* KUZE HOUSE.
scene.25 END

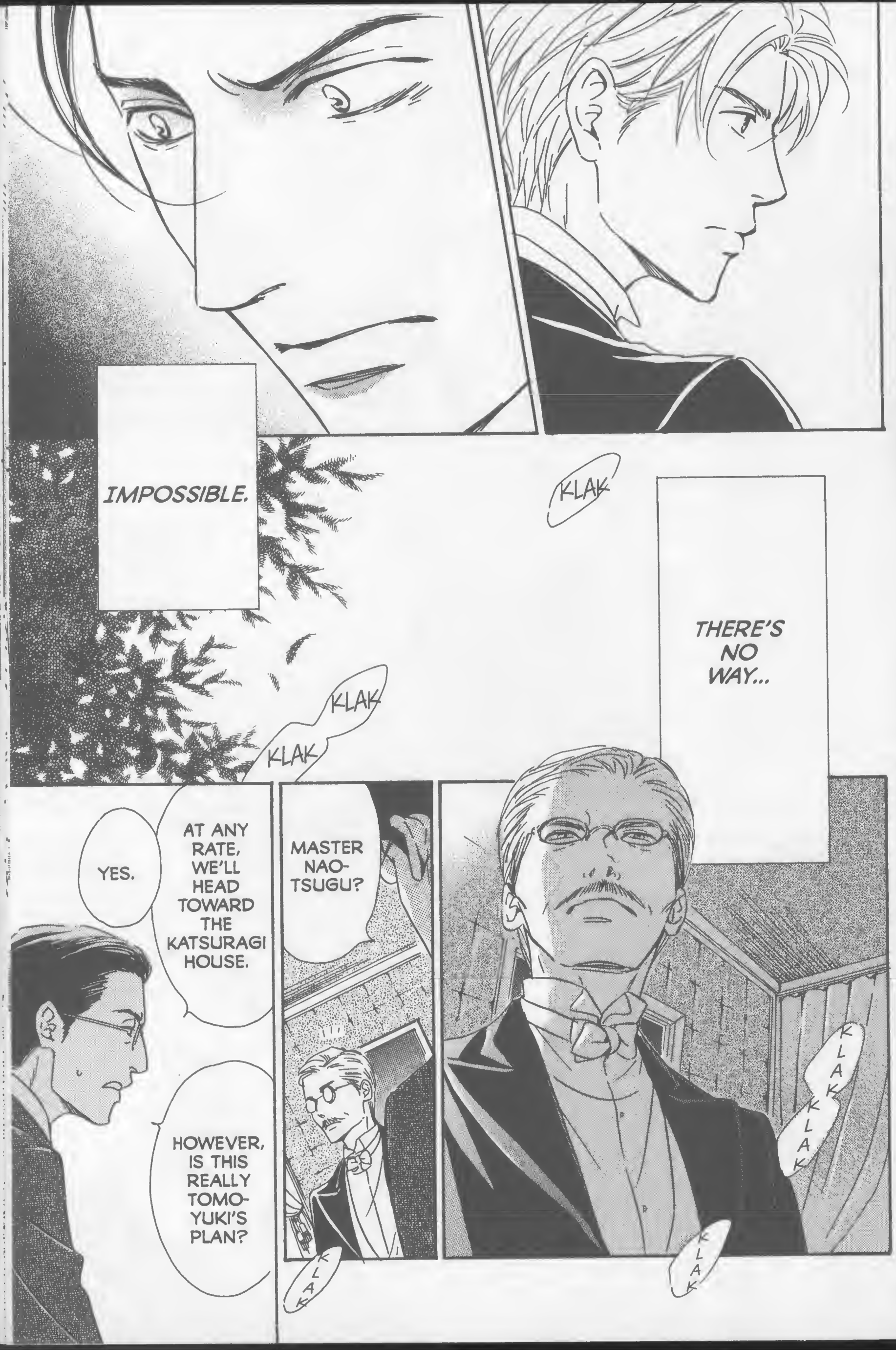
Blue Morning: Scene 26

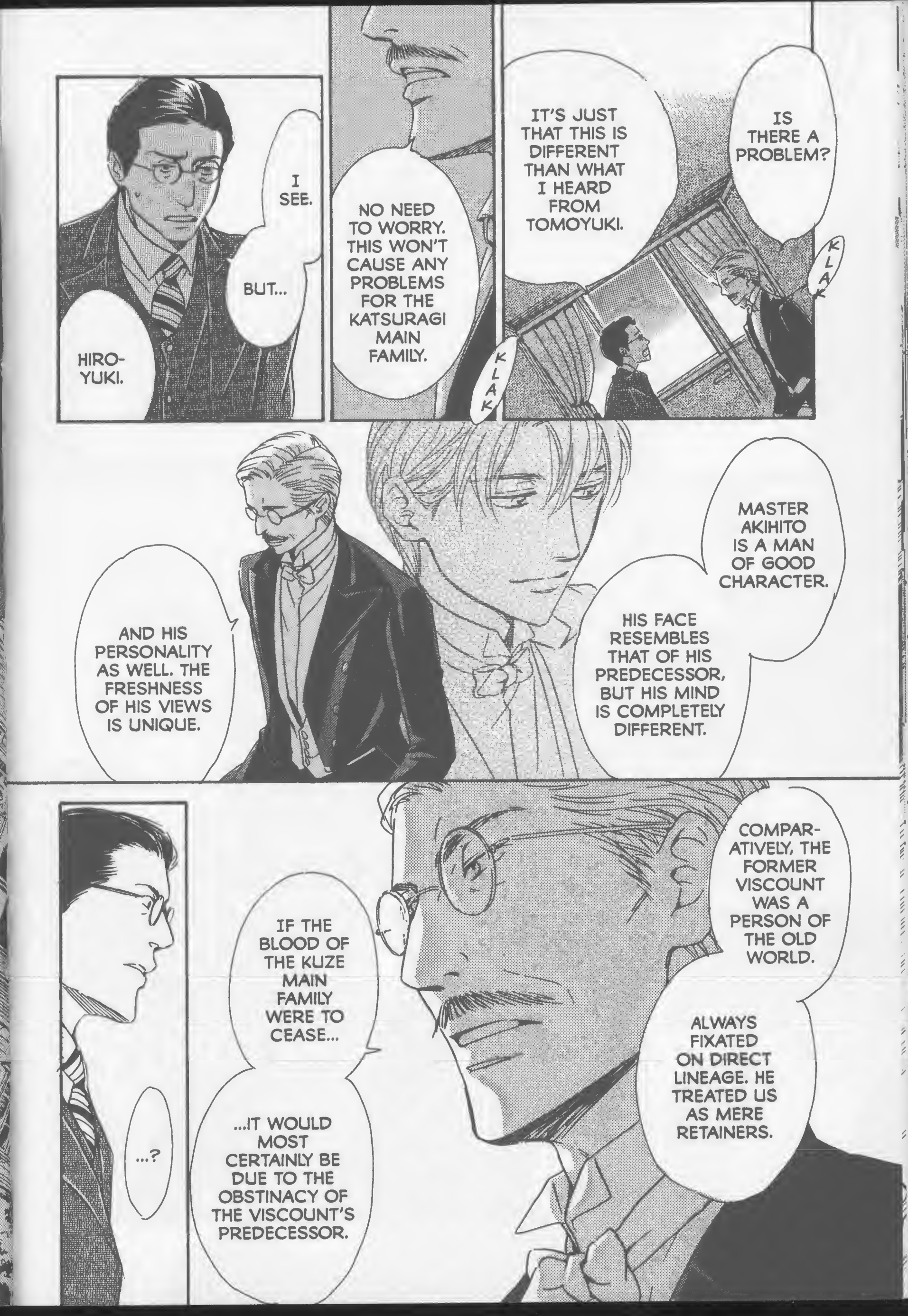

憂鬱な朝
scene:26

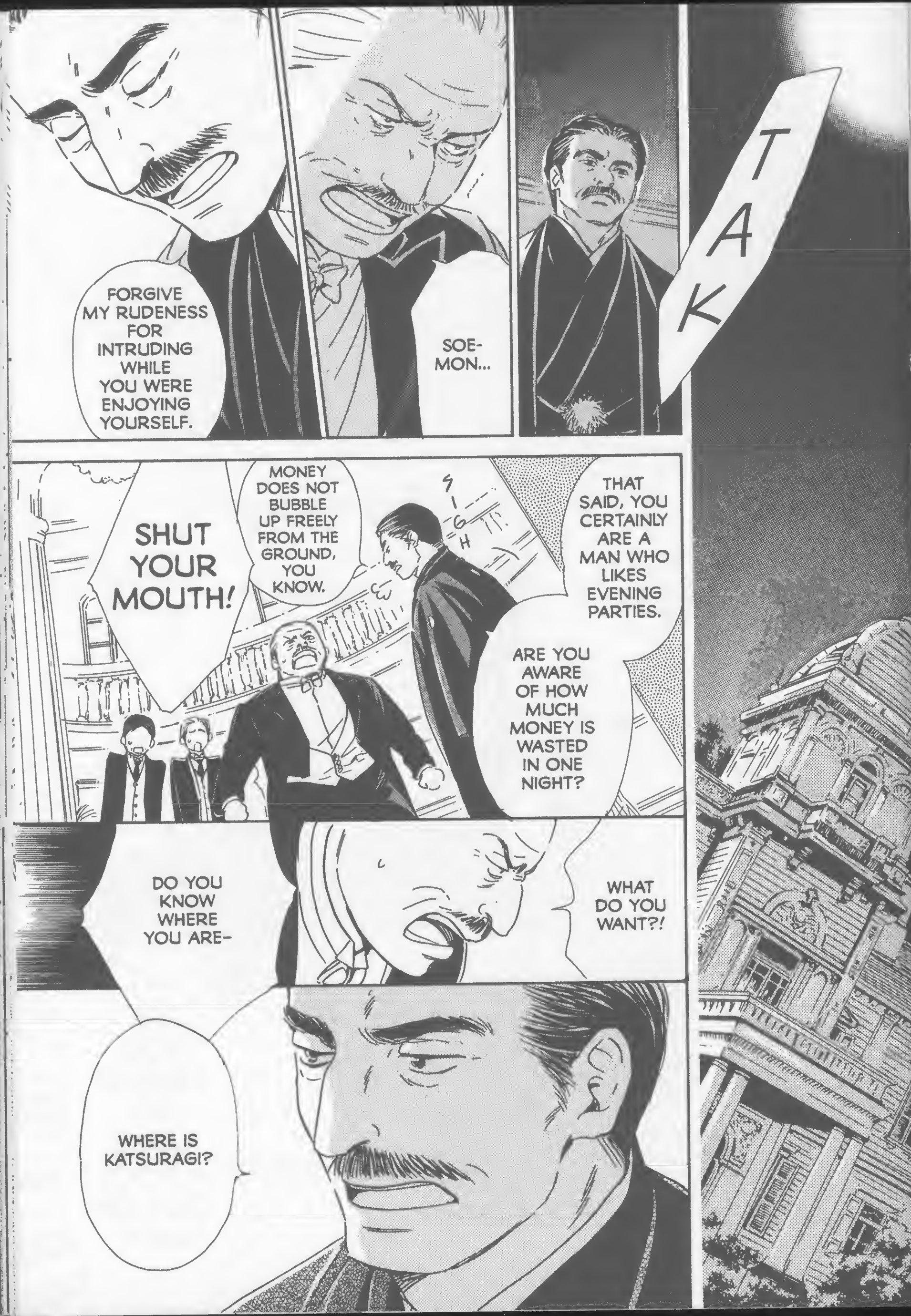

...
END THE KUZE HOUSE?
EXACTLY.
WHAT...
...ARE YOU SAYING?
SO YOU CAN LOOK SHOCKED TOO, HM?
I DIDN'T THINK YOU COULD.
TAKAYUKI.
I NEED TO TALK TO YOU. WILL YOU HEAR ME OUT?

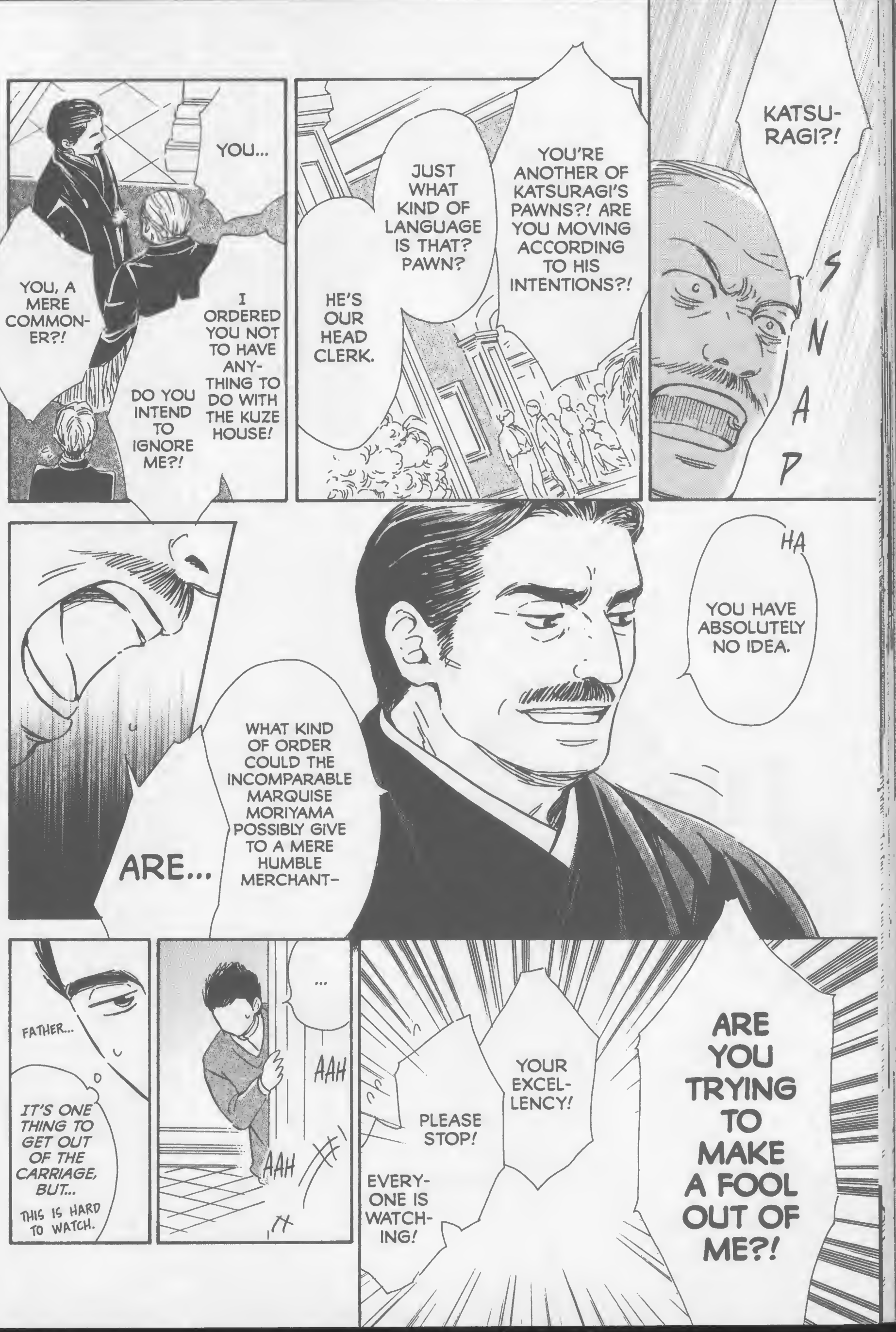

WHAT...
WHAT IS MASTER AKIHITO SAYING?
WHAT DOES HE MEAN MASTER NAOTSUGU HAS WITHDRAWN?
...
MASTER AKIHITO DOUBTED ME...
OR HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO MERELY BE ADMONISHED AND THEN LEAVE.
BUT...

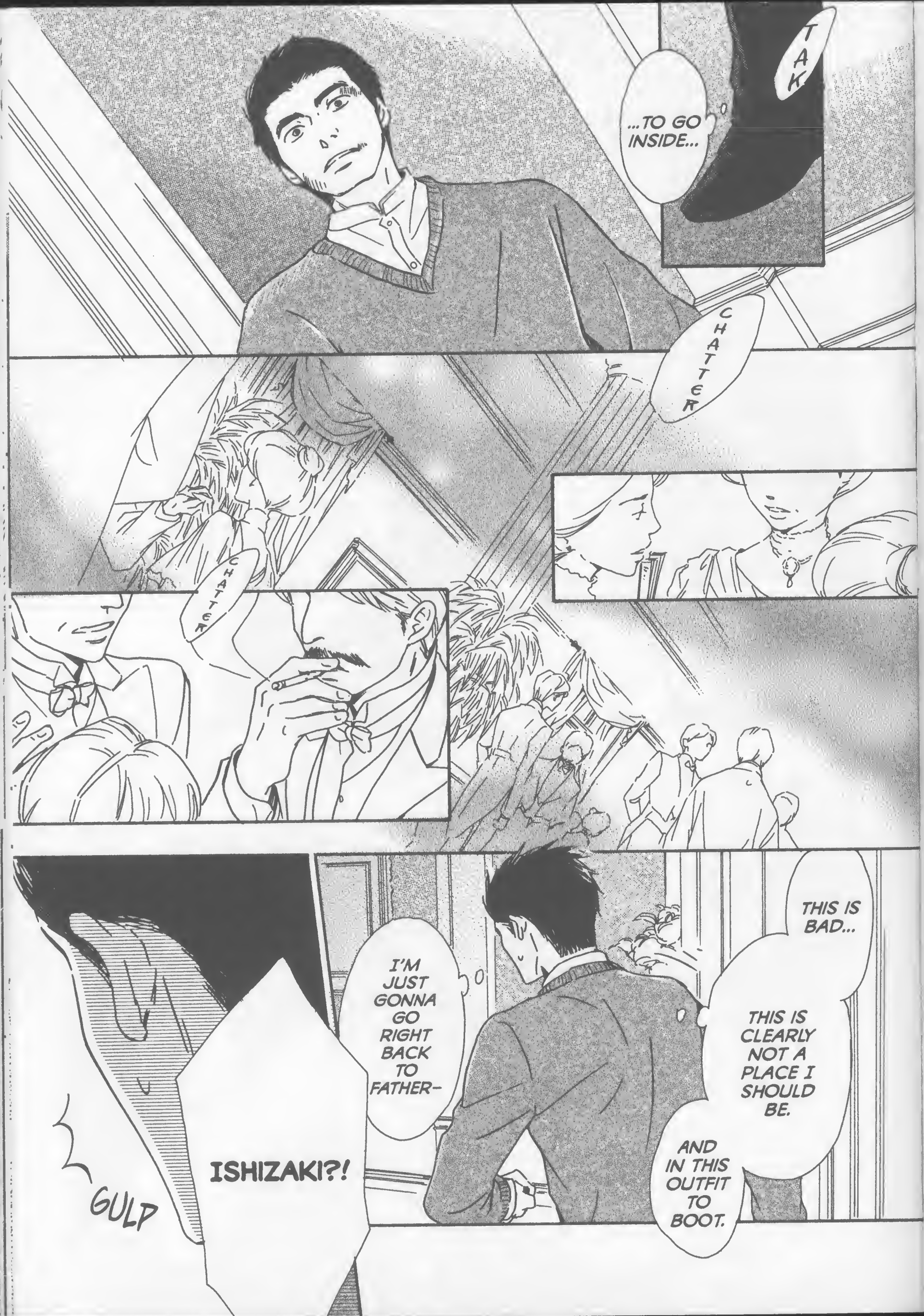

...MASTER NAOTSUGU WOULD HAVE NEVER WITHDRAWN!
THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NO WAY HE'D LET SUCH A FAVORABLE OPPORTUNITY SUCH AS RETURNING TO THE KUZE HOUSE SLIP AWAY.
GRAB
...
WHAT DID HE SAY?
YOU'RE BEING DECEIVED, MASTER AKIHITO.
IT'S NOT POSSIBLE THAT MASTER NAOTSUGU DOES NOT SEEK YOUR TITLE!
DON'T SAY THAT.
THERE'S NOTHING TO BE DONE ABOUT SOMEONE WHO'S NO LONGER HERE.

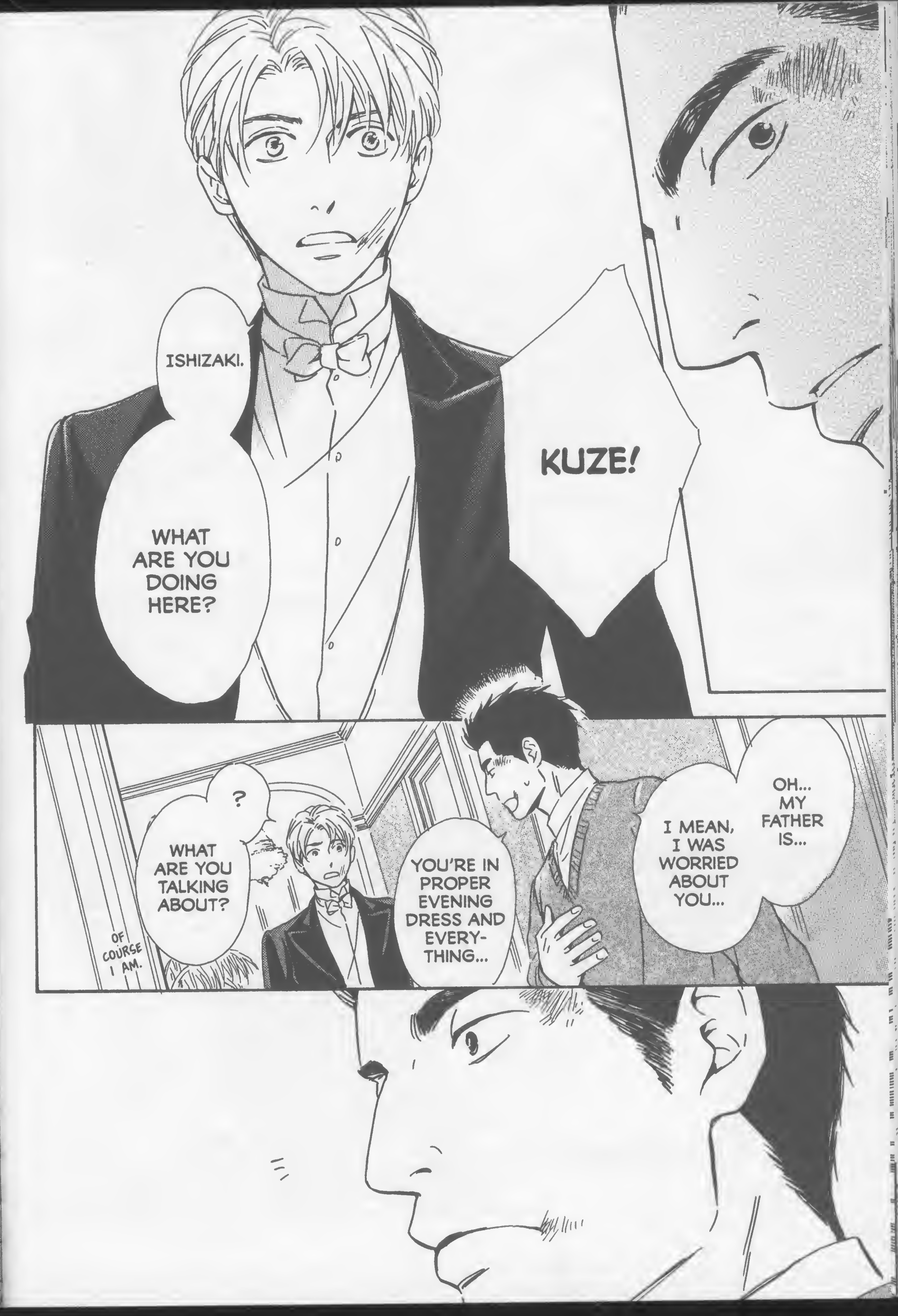

KLAK
THERE'S NO WAY...
IMPOSSIBLE.
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK KLAK KLAK
KLAK
MASTER NAOTSUGU?
KLAK
AT ANY RATE, WE'LL HEAD TOWARD THE KATSURAGI HOUSE.
YES.
HOWEVER, IS THIS REALLY TOMOYUKI'S PLAN?

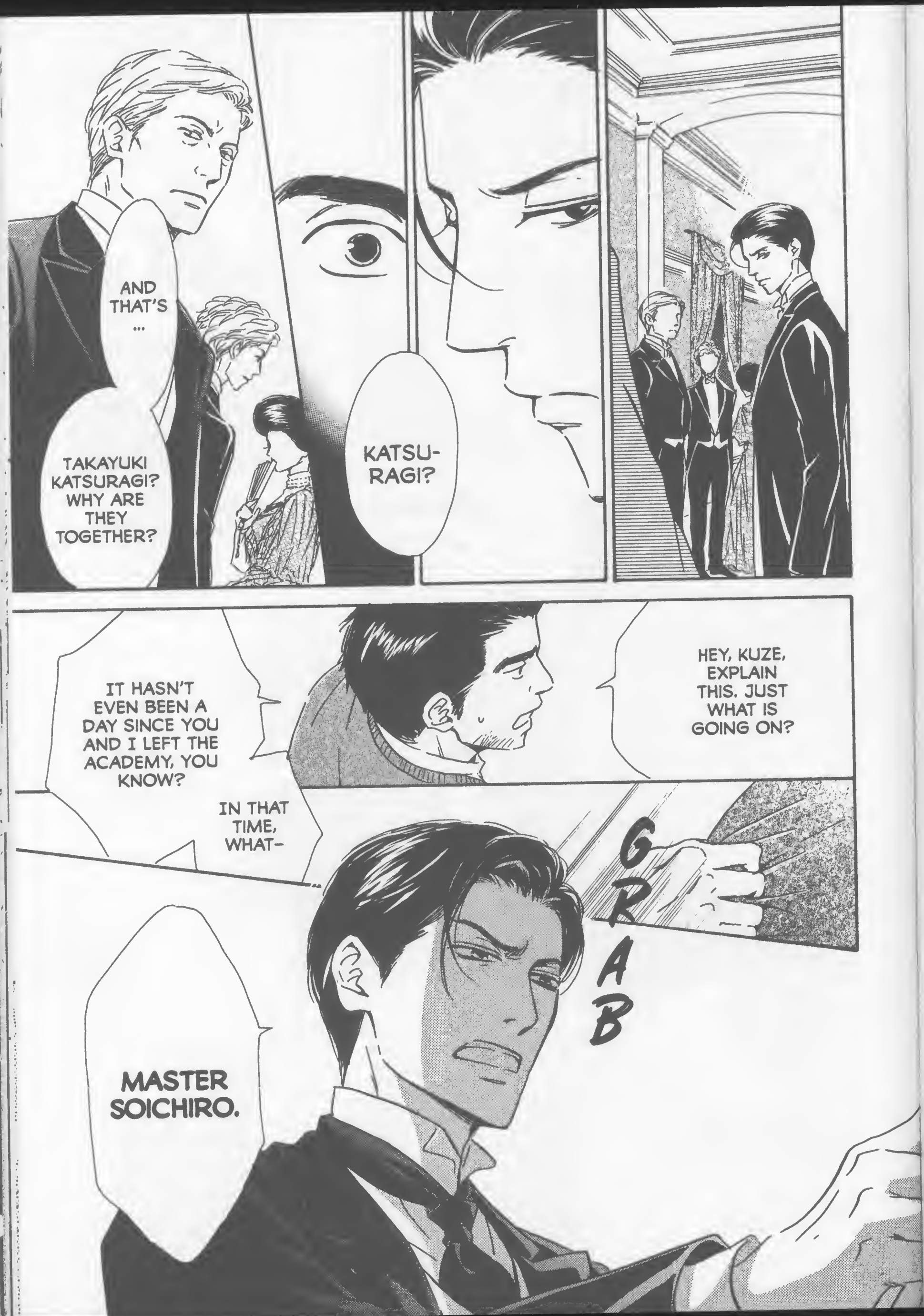

IS THERE A PROBLEM?
IT'S JUST THAT THIS IS DIFFERENT THAN WHAT I HEARD FROM TOMOYUKI.
KLAK
KLAK
NO NEED TO WORRY. THIS WON'T CAUSE ANY PROBLEMS FOR THE KATSURAGI MAIN FAMILY.
I SEE.
BUT...
HIROYUKI.
MASTER AKIHITO IS A MAN OF GOOD CHARACTER.
HIS FACE RESEMBLES THAT OF HIS PREDECESSOR, BUT HIS MIND IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.
AND HIS PERSONALITY AS WELL. THE FRESHNESS OF HIS VIEWS IS UNIQUE.
COMPARATIVELY, THE FORMER VISCOUNT WAS A PERSON OF THE OLD WORLD.
ALWAYS FIXATED ON DIRECT LINEAGE. HE TREATED US AS MERE RETAINERS.
IF THE BLOOD OF THE KUZE MAIN FAMILY WERE TO CEASE...
...IT WOULD MOST CERTAINLY BE DUE TO THE OBSTINACY OF THE VISCOUNT'S PREDECESSOR.
...?

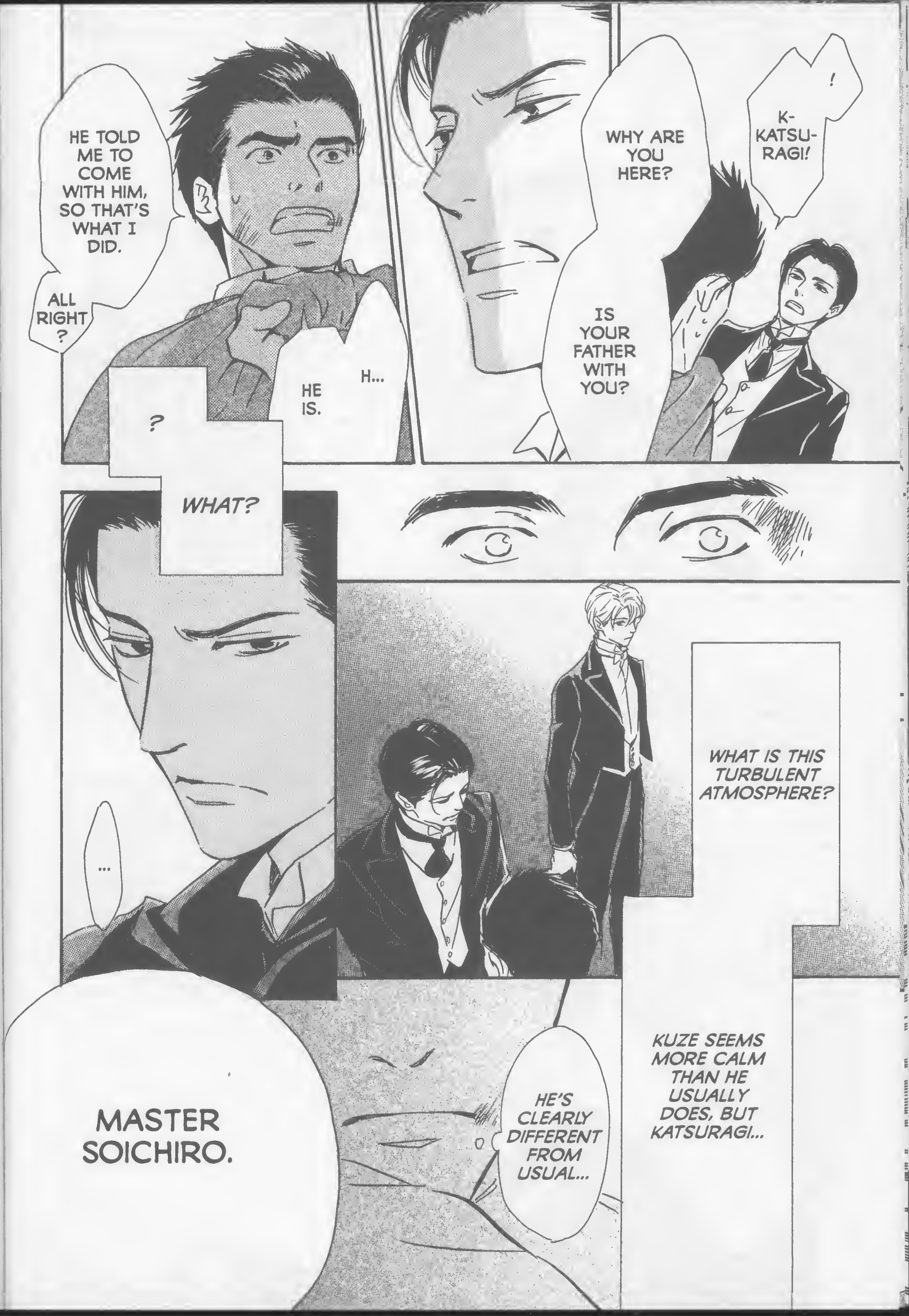

TAK
SOEMON...
FORGIVE MY RUDENESS FOR INTRUDING WHILE YOU WERE ENJOYING YOURSELF.
THAT SAID, YOU CERTAINLY ARE A MAN WHO LIKES EVENING PARTIES.
ARE YOU AWARE OF HOW MUCH MONEY IS WASTED IN ONE NIGHT?
SIGH
MONEY DOES NOT BUBBLE UP FREELY FROM THE GROUND, YOU KNOW.
SHUT YOUR MOUTH!
WHAT DO YOU WANT?!
DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU ARE-
WHERE IS KATSURAGI?

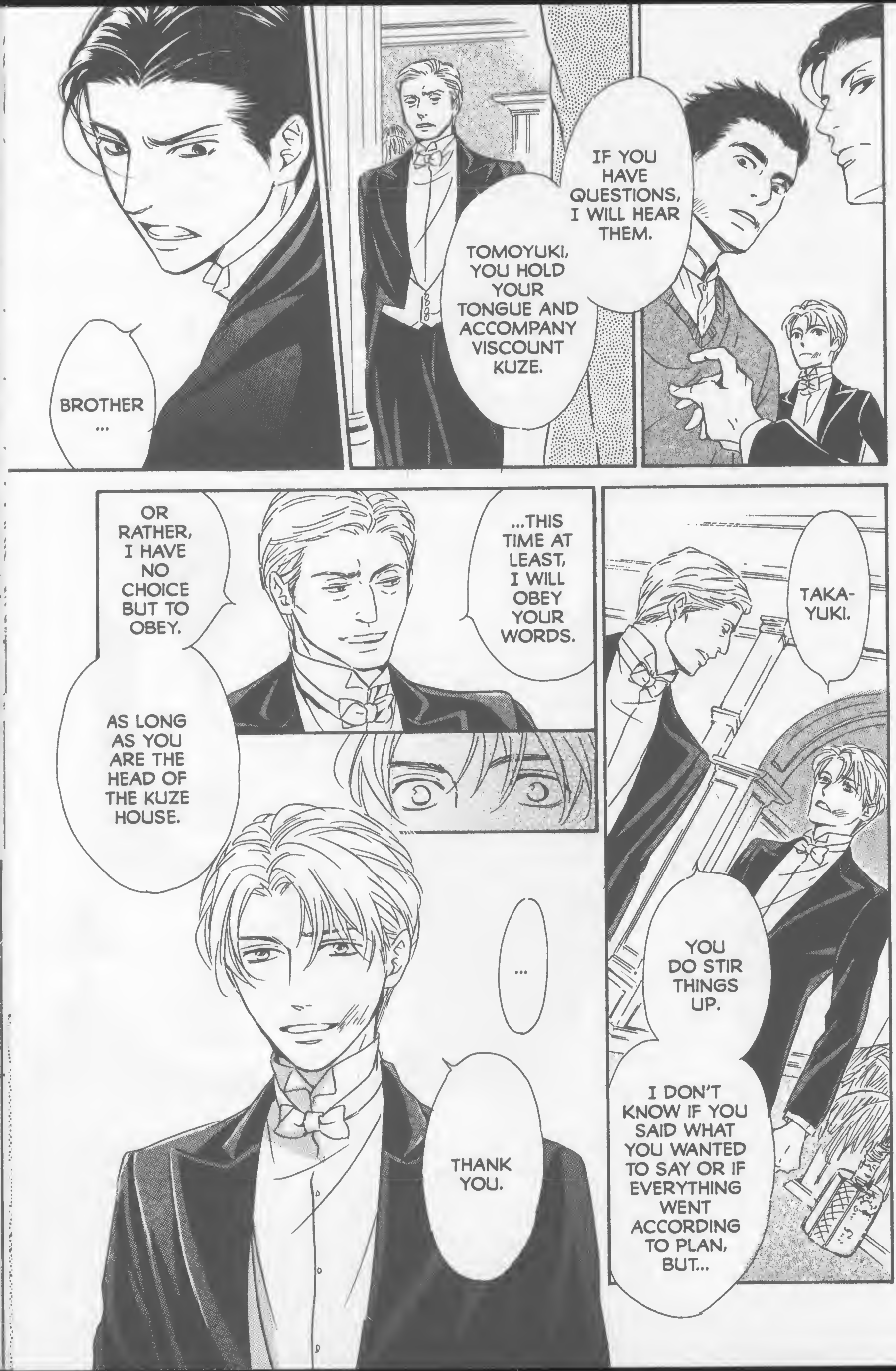

KATSURAGI?!
SNAP
YOU'RE ANOTHER OF KATSURAGI'S PAWNS?! ARE YOU MOVING ACCORDING TO HIS INTENTIONS?!
JUST WHAT KIND OF LANGUAGE IS THAT? PAWN?
HE'S OUR HEAD CLERK.
YOU...
I ORDERED YOU NOT TO HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE KUZE HOUSE!
DO YOU INTEND TO IGNORE ME?!
YOU, A MERE COMMONER?!
HA
YOU HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA.
WHAT KIND OF ORDER COULD THE INCOMPARABLE MARQUISE MORIYAMA POSSIBLY GIVE TO A MERE HUMBLE MERCHANT-
ARE...
ARE YOU TRYING TO MAKE A FOOL OUT OF ME?!
YOUR EXCELLENCY!
PLEASE STOP!
EVERYONE IS WATCHING!
...
AAH
AAH
FATHER...
IT'S ONE THING TO GET OUT OF THE CARRIAGE, BUT...
THIS IS HARD TO WATCH.

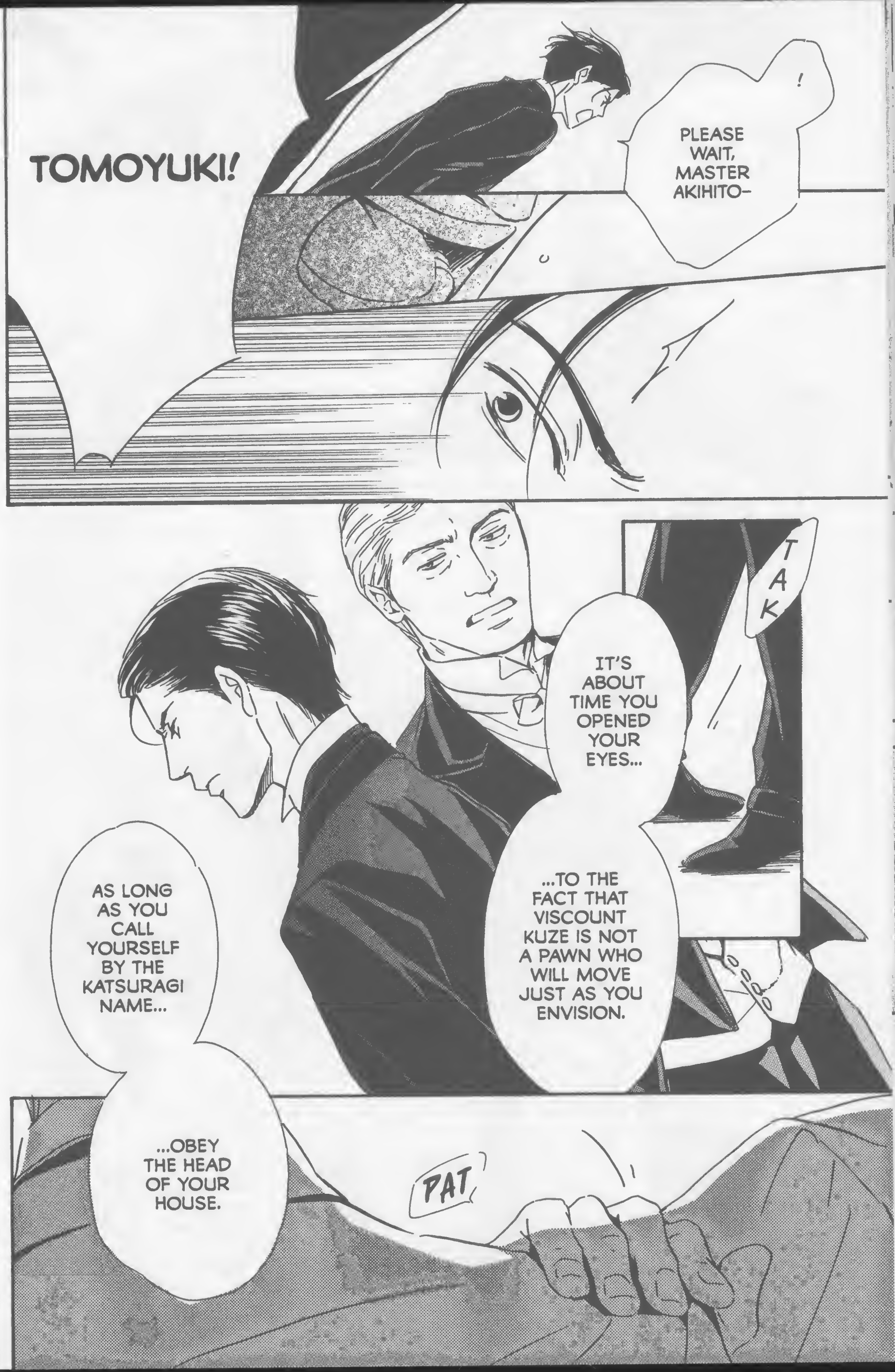

TAK
...TO GO INSIDE...
CHATTER
CHATTER
THIS IS BAD...
THIS IS CLEARLY NOT A PLACE I SHOULD BE.
AND IN THIS OUTFIT TO BOOT.
I'M JUST GONNA GO RIGHT BACK TO FATHER-
ISHIZAKI?!
GULP

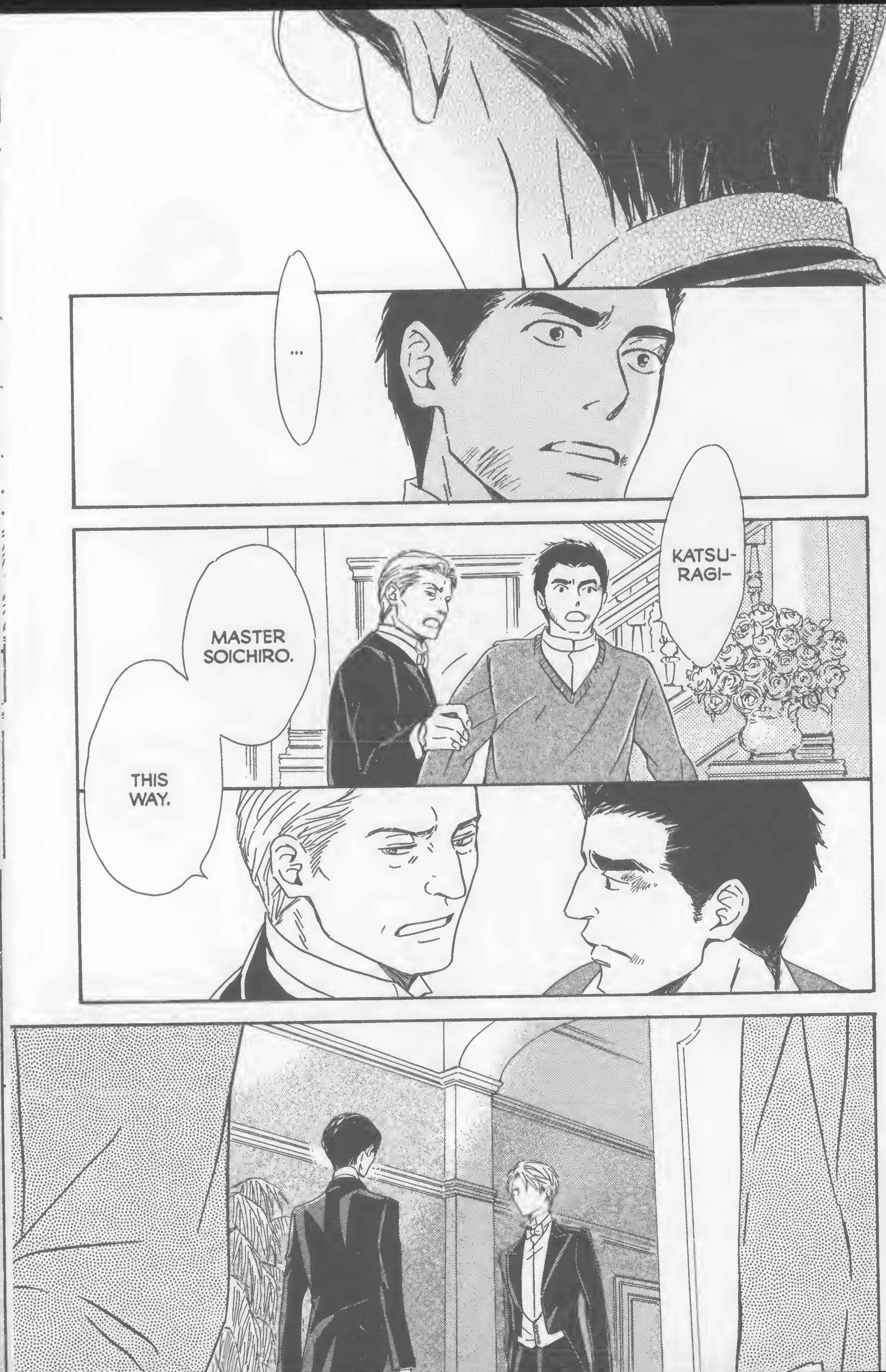

KUZE!
ISHIZAKI.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
OH... MY FATHER IS...
I MEAN, I WAS WORRIED ABOUT YOU...
YOU'RE IN PROPER EVENING DRESS AND EVERYTHING...
?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
OF COURSE I AM.

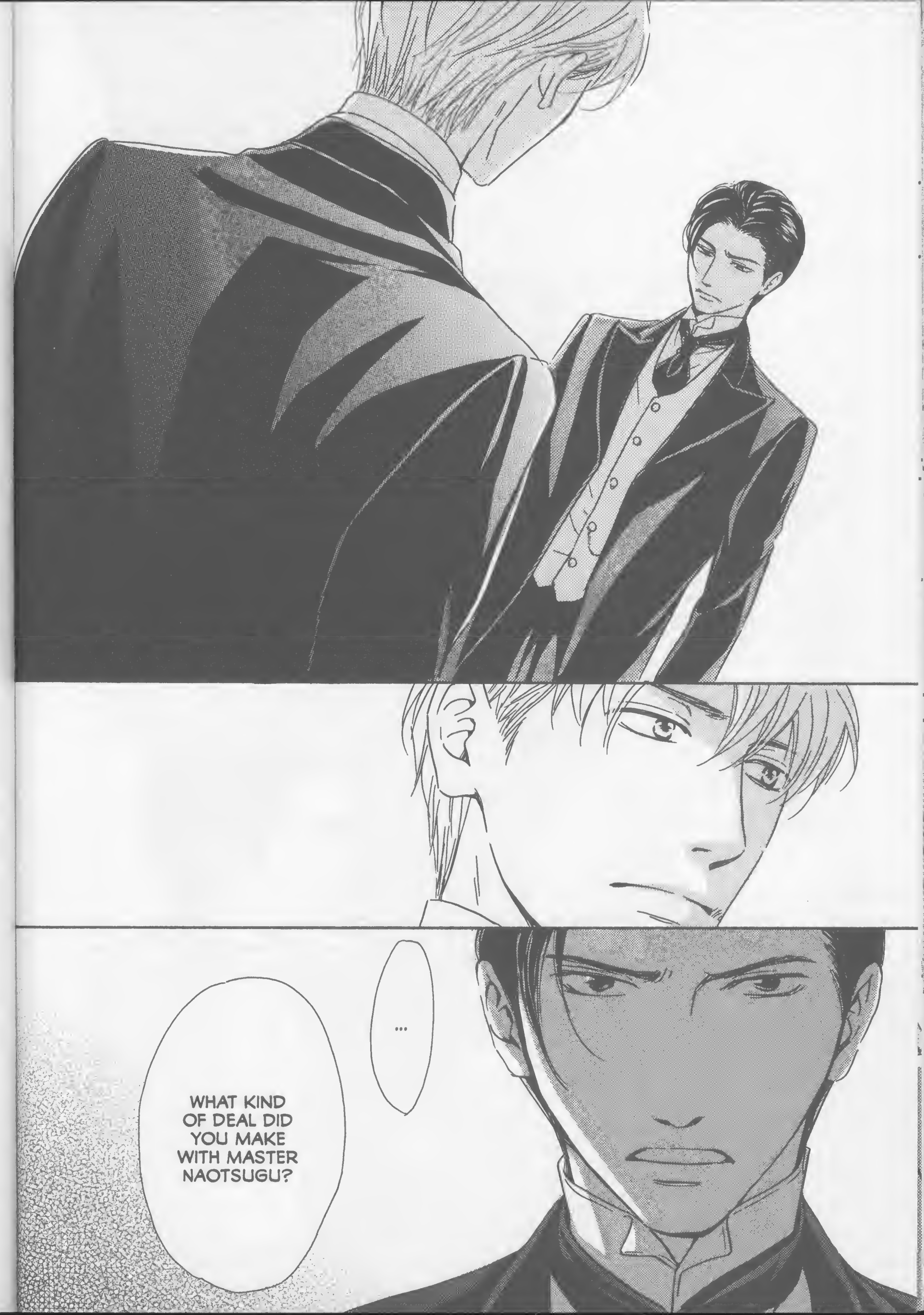

KATSU-RAGI?
AND THAT'S ...
TAKAYUKI KATSURAGI? WHY ARE THEY TOGETHER?
HEY, KUZE, EXPLAIN THIS. JUST WHAT IS GOING ON?
IT HASN'T EVEN BEEN A DAY SINCE YOU AND I LEFT THE ACADEMY, YOU KNOW?
IN THAT TIME, WHAT-
GRAB
MASTER SOICHIRO.

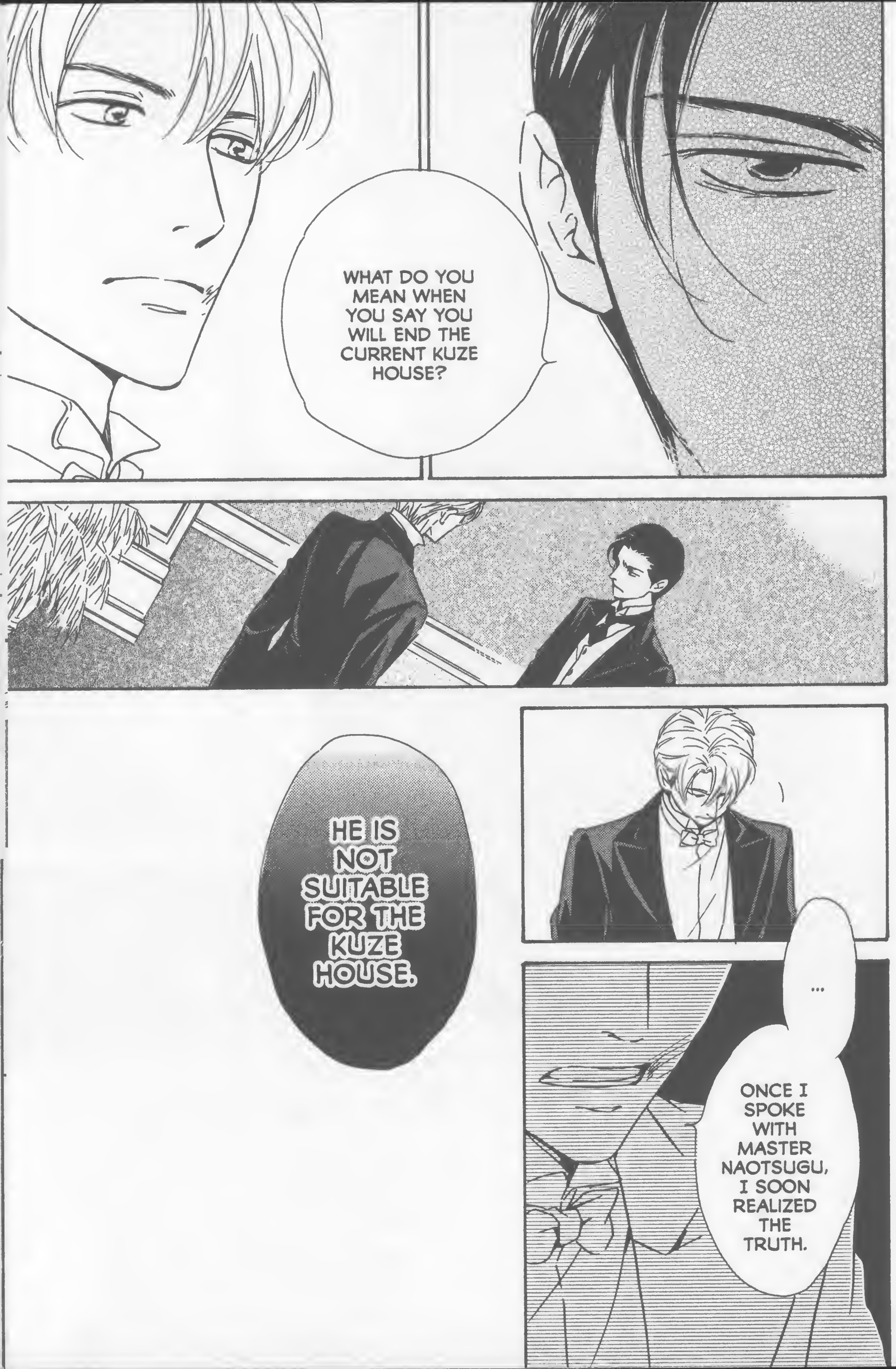

!
K-KATSURAGI!
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
IS YOUR FATHER WITH YOU?
HE TOLD ME TO COME WITH HIM, SO THAT'S WHAT I DID.
ALL RIGHT?
H...
HE IS.
?
WHAT?
WHAT IS THIS TURBULENT ATMOSPHERE?
...
KUZE SEEMS MORE CALM THAN HE USUALLY DOES, BUT KATSURAGI...
HE'S CLEARLY DIFFERENT FROM USUAL...
MASTER SOICHIRO.

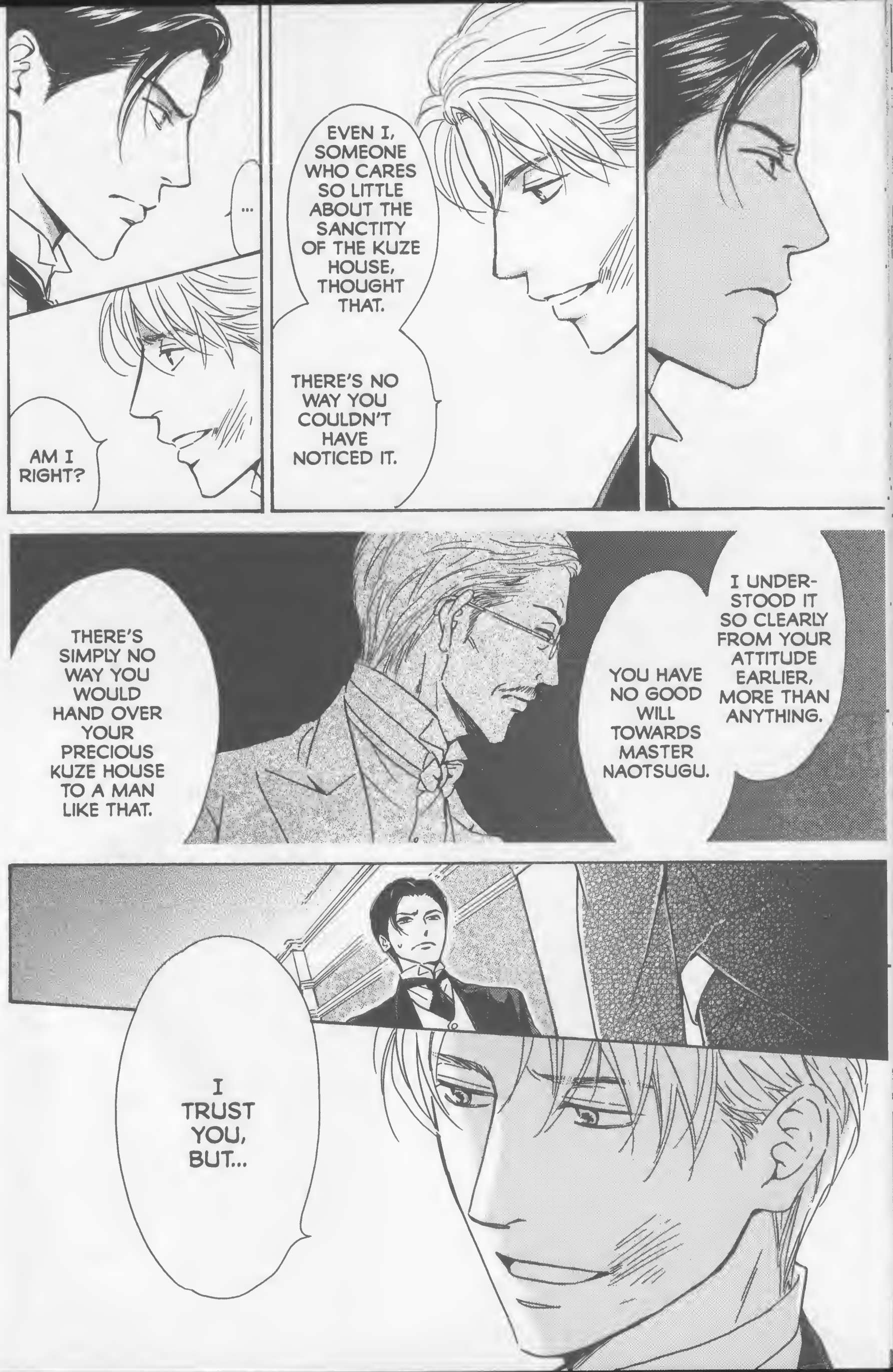

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, I WILL HEAR THEM.
TOMOYUKI, YOU HOLD YOUR TONGUE AND ACCOMPANY VISCOUNT KUZE.
BROTHER ...
TAKA-YUKI.
YOU DO STIR THINGS UP.
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU SAID WHAT YOU WANTED TO SAY OR IF EVERYTHING WENT ACCORDING TO PLAN, BUT...
...THIS TIME AT LEAST, I WILL OBEY YOUR WORDS.
OR RATHER, I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO OBEY.
AS LONG AS YOU ARE THE HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
...
THANK YOU.

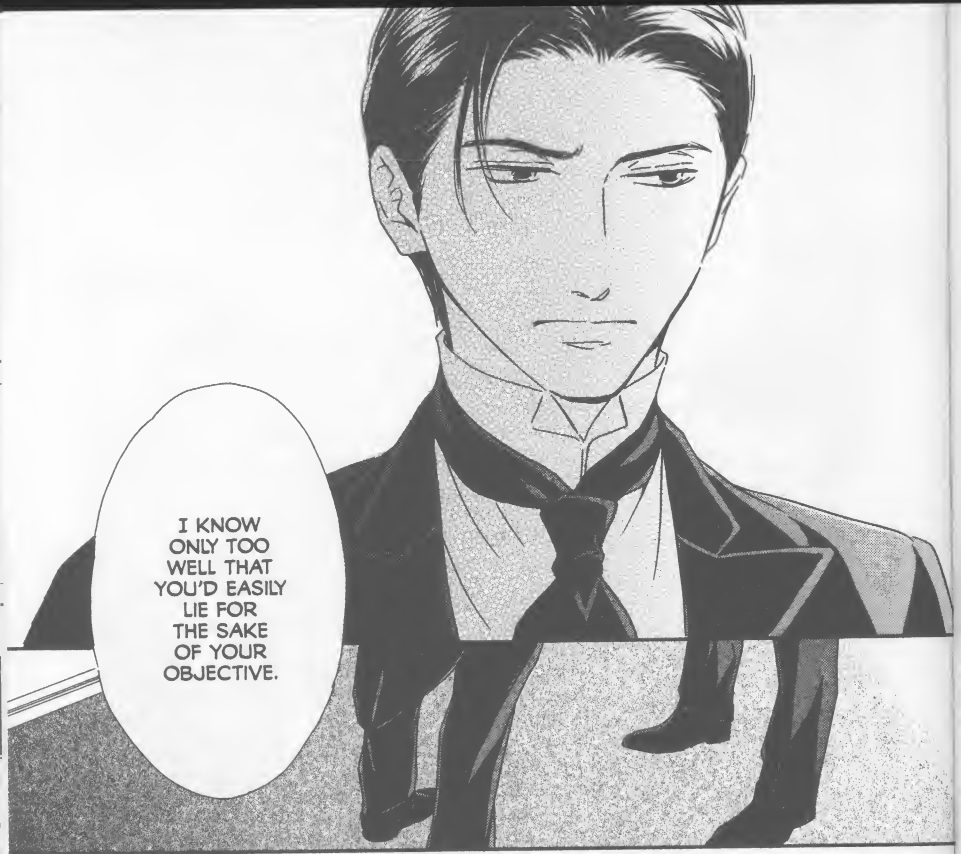

!
PLEASE WAIT, MASTER AKIHITO–
TOMOYUKI!
TAK
IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU OPENED YOUR EYES...
...TO THE FACT THAT VISCOUNT KUZE IS NOT A PAWN WHO WILL MOVE JUST AS YOU ENVISION.
AS LONG AS YOU CALL YOURSELF BY THE KATSURAGI NAME...
PAT
...OBEY THE HEAD OF YOUR HOUSE.

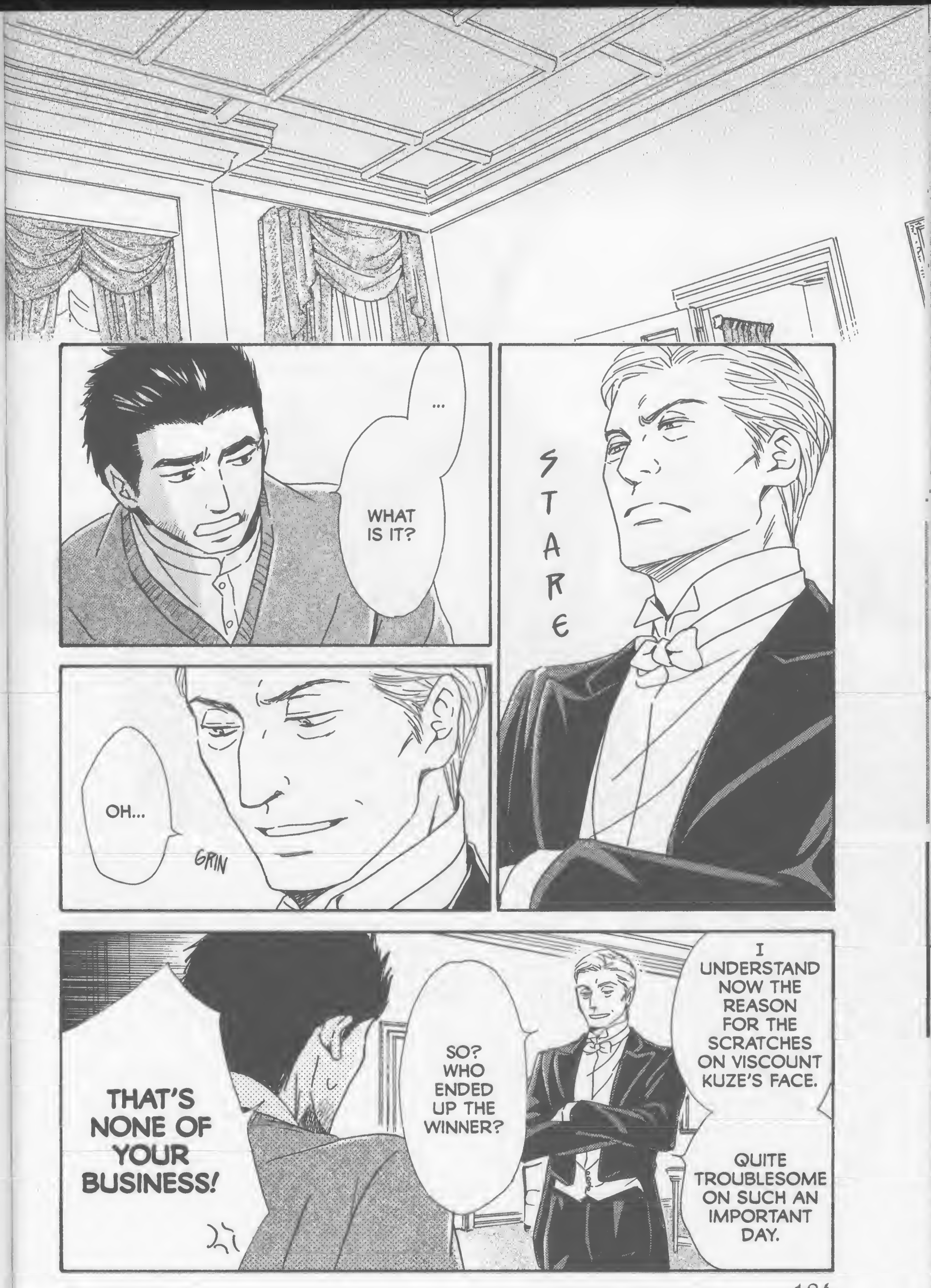

...
KATSURAGI–
MASTER SOICHIRO.
THIS WAY.

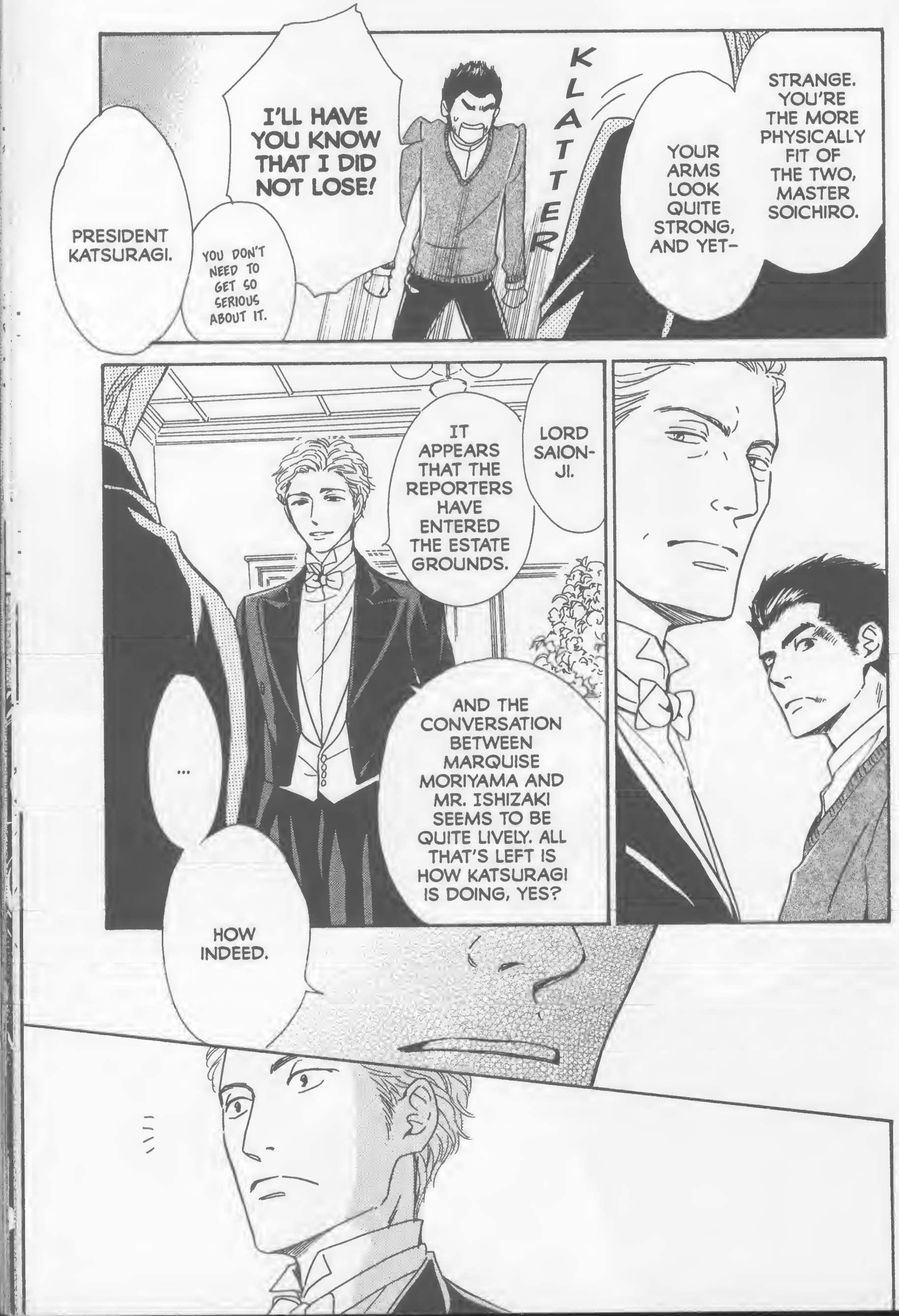

...
WHAT KIND OF DEAL DID YOU MAKE WITH MASTER NAOTSUGU?

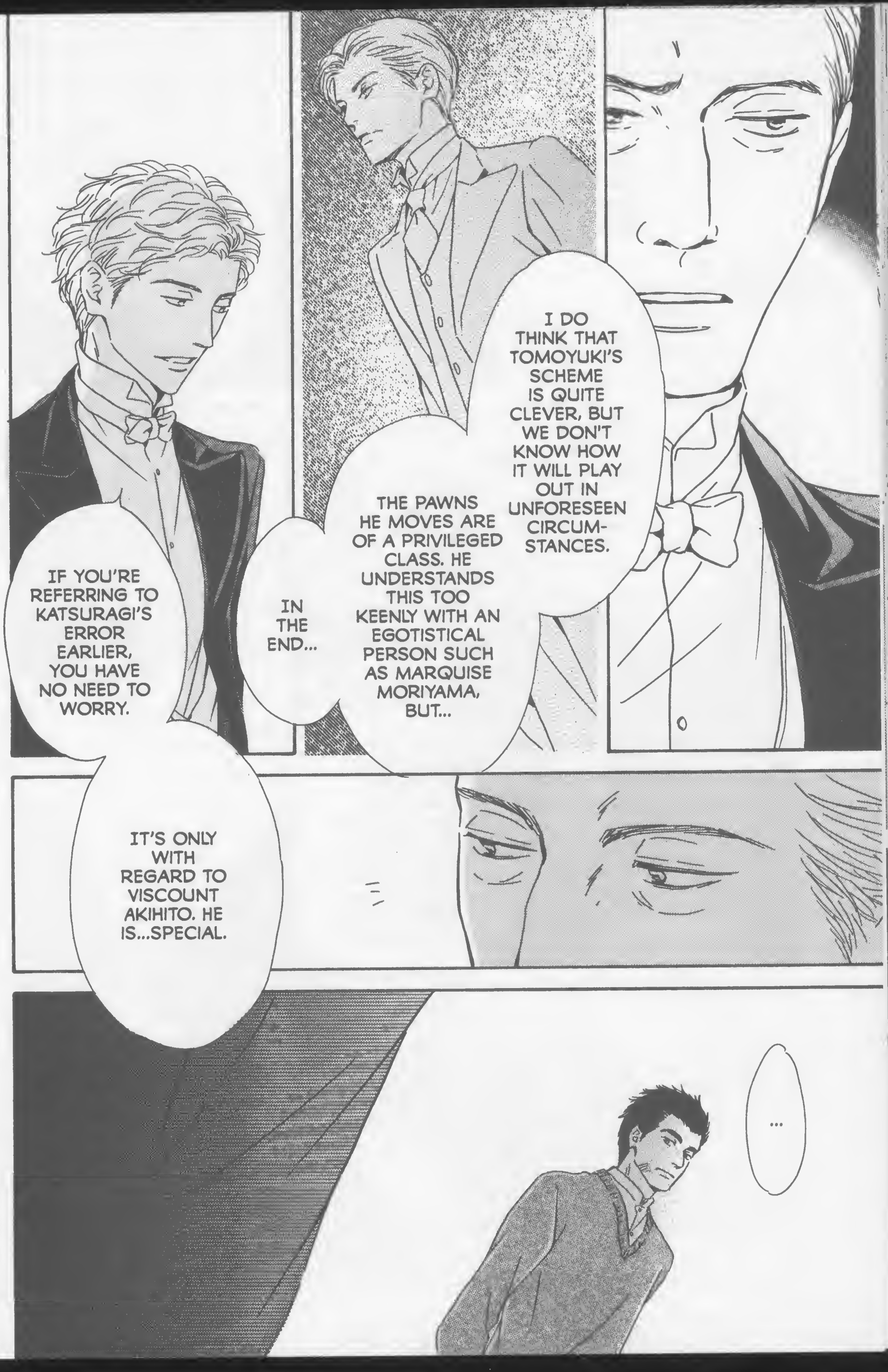

WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAY YOU WILL END THE CURRENT KUZE HOUSE?
...
ONCE I SPOKE WITH MASTER NAOTSUGU, I SOON REALIZED THE TRUTH.
HE IS NOT SUITABLE FOR THE KUZE HOUSE.

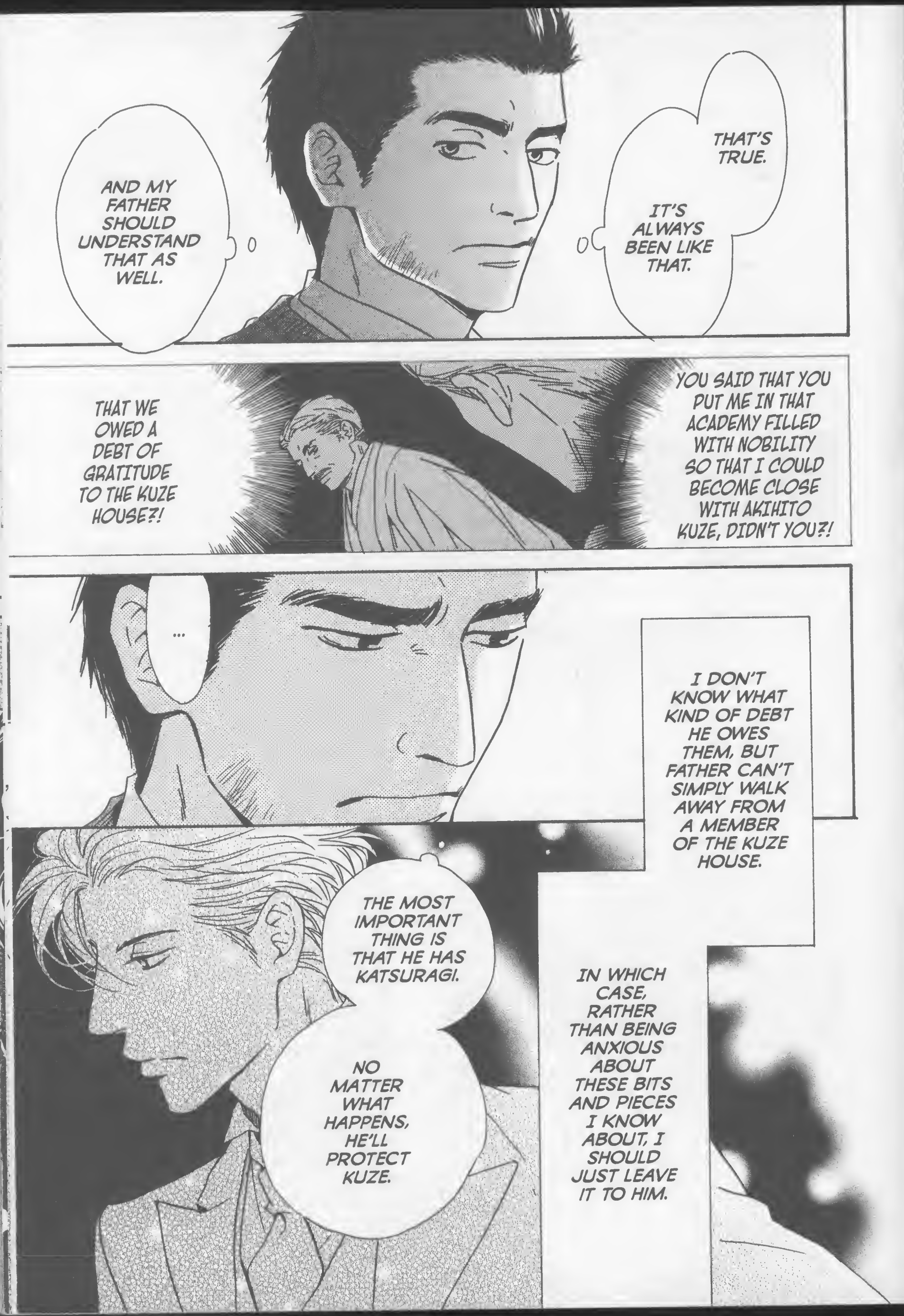

EVEN I, SOMEONE WHO CARES SO LITTLE ABOUT THE SANCTITY OF THE KUZE HOUSE, THOUGHT THAT.
THERE'S NO WAY YOU COULDN'T HAVE NOTICED IT.
...
AM I RIGHT?
I UNDERSTOOD IT SO CLEARLY FROM YOUR ATTITUDE EARLIER, MORE THAN ANYTHING.
YOU HAVE NO GOOD WILL TOWARDS MASTER NAOTSUGU.
THERE'S SIMPLY NO WAY YOU WOULD HAND OVER YOUR PRECIOUS KUZE HOUSE TO A MAN LIKE THAT.
I TRUST YOU, BUT...

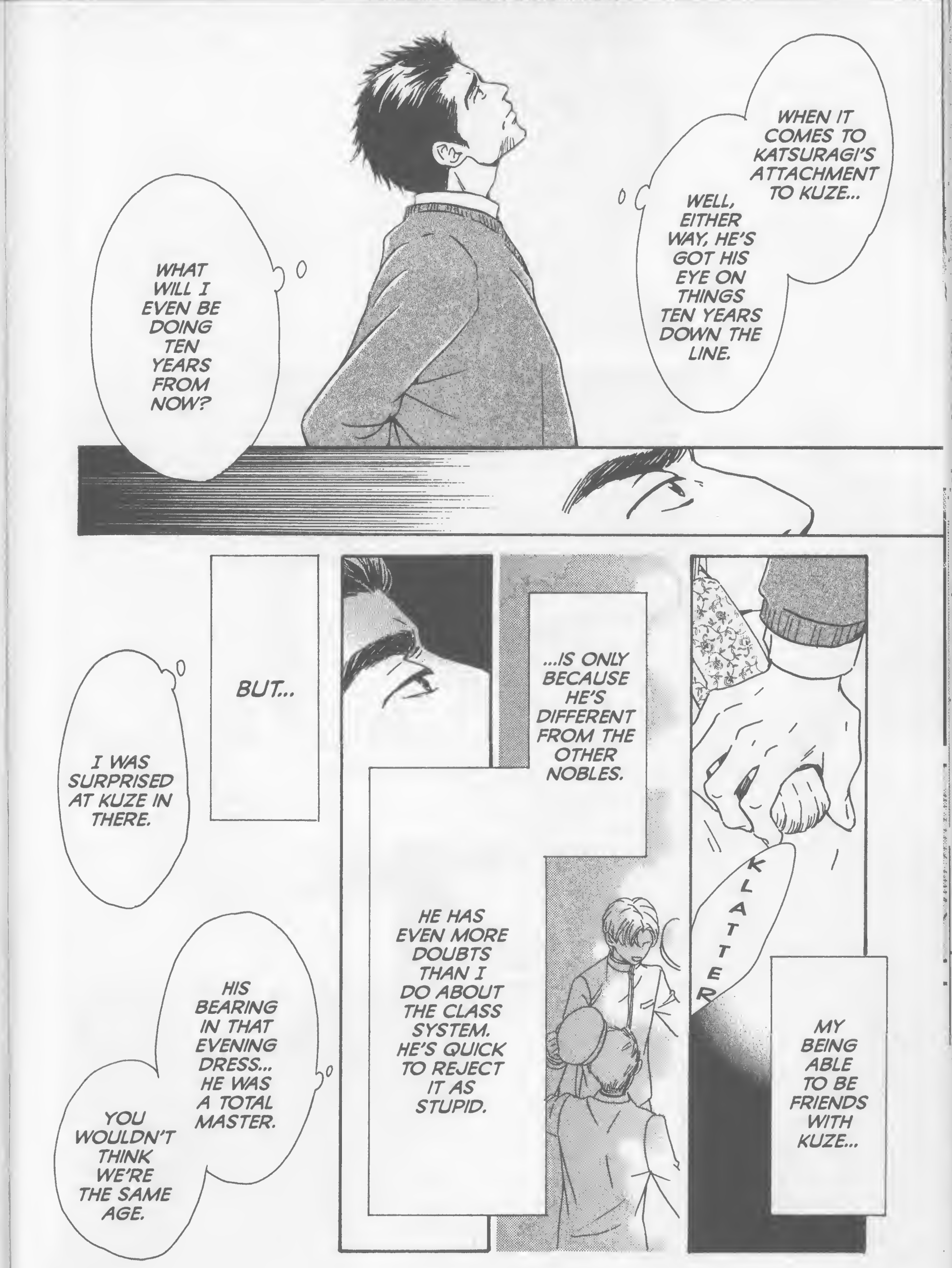

I KNOW ONLY TOO WELL THAT YOU'D EASILY LIE FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR OBJECTIVE.

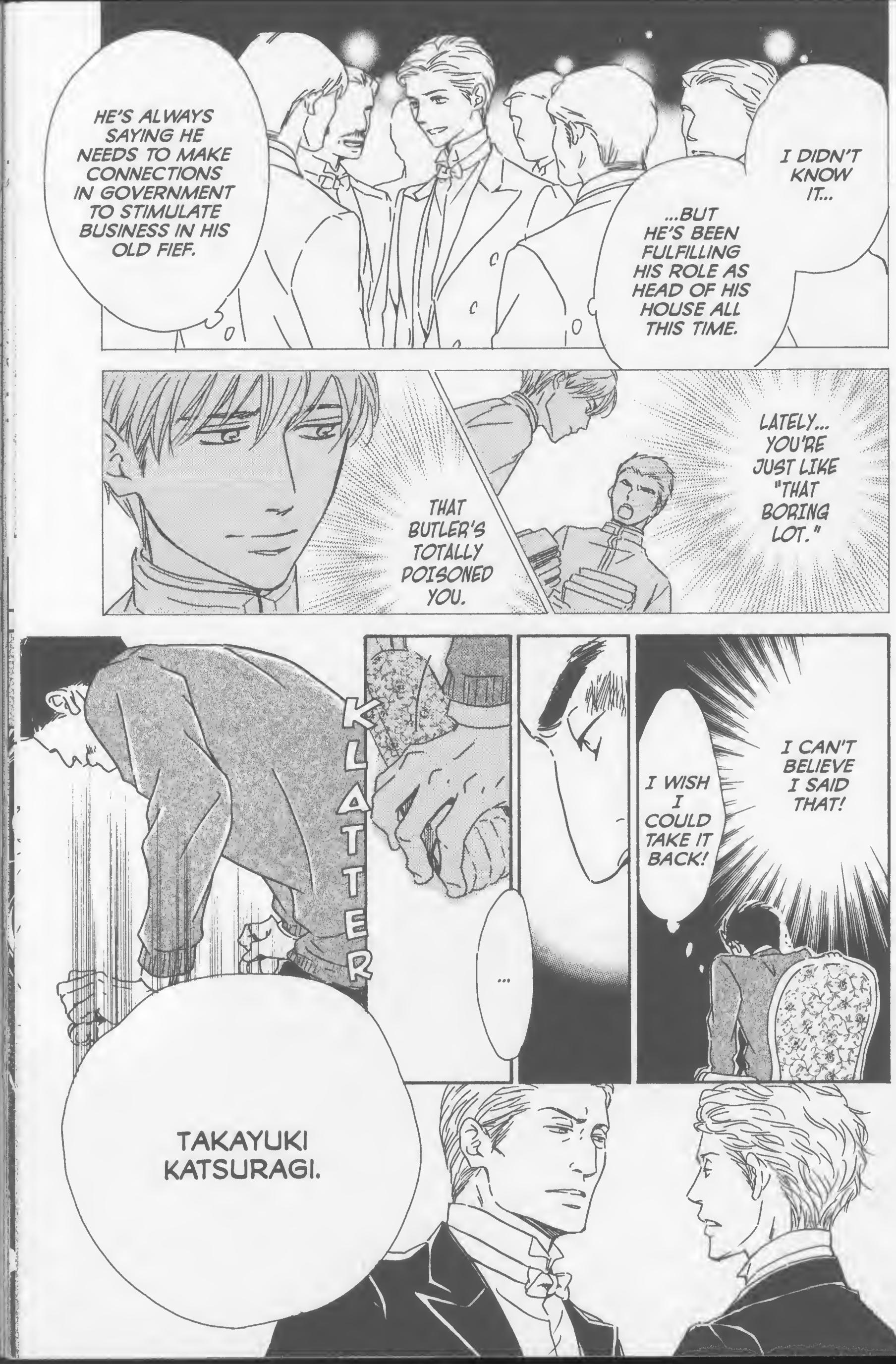

STARE
...
WHAT IS IT?
OH...
GRIN
I UNDERSTAND NOW THE REASON FOR THE SCRATCHES ON VISCOUNT KUZE'S FACE.
QUITE TROUBLESOME ON SUCH AN IMPORTANT DAY.
SO? WHO ENDED UP THE WINNER?
THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!

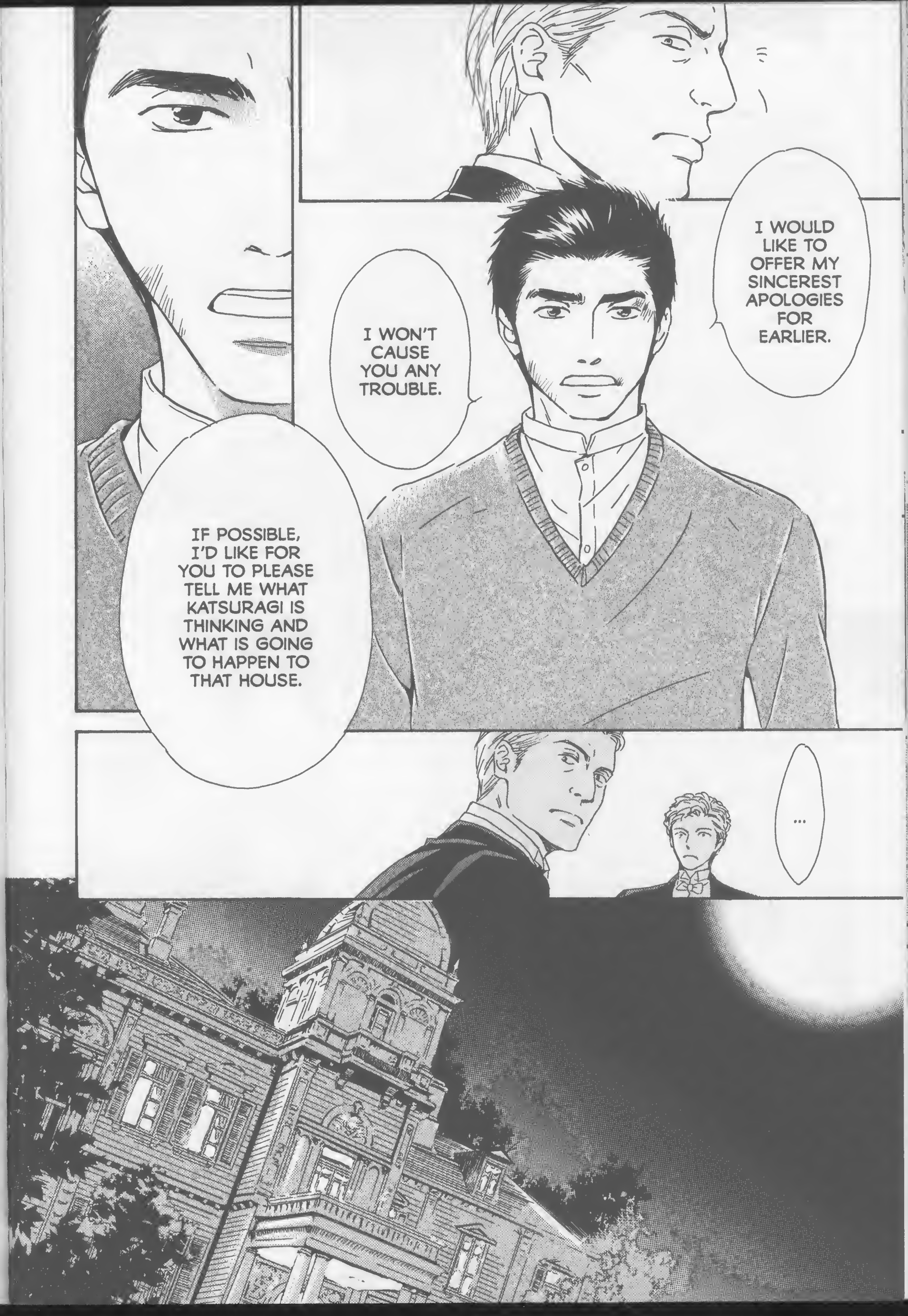

STRANGE. YOU'RE THE MORE PHYSICALLY FIT OF THE TWO, MASTER SOICHIRO.
YOUR ARMS LOOK QUITE STRONG, AND YET-
KLATTER
I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW THAT I DID NOT LOSE!
YOU DON'T NEED TO GET SO SERIOUS ABOUT IT.
PRESIDENT KATSURAGI.
LORD SAION-JI.
IT APPEARS THAT THE REPORTERS HAVE ENTERED THE ESTATE GROUNDS.
AND THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN MARQUISE MORIYAMA AND MR. ISHIZAKI SEEMS TO BE QUITE LIVELY. ALL THAT'S LEFT IS HOW KATSURAGI IS DOING, YES?
...
HOW INDEED.

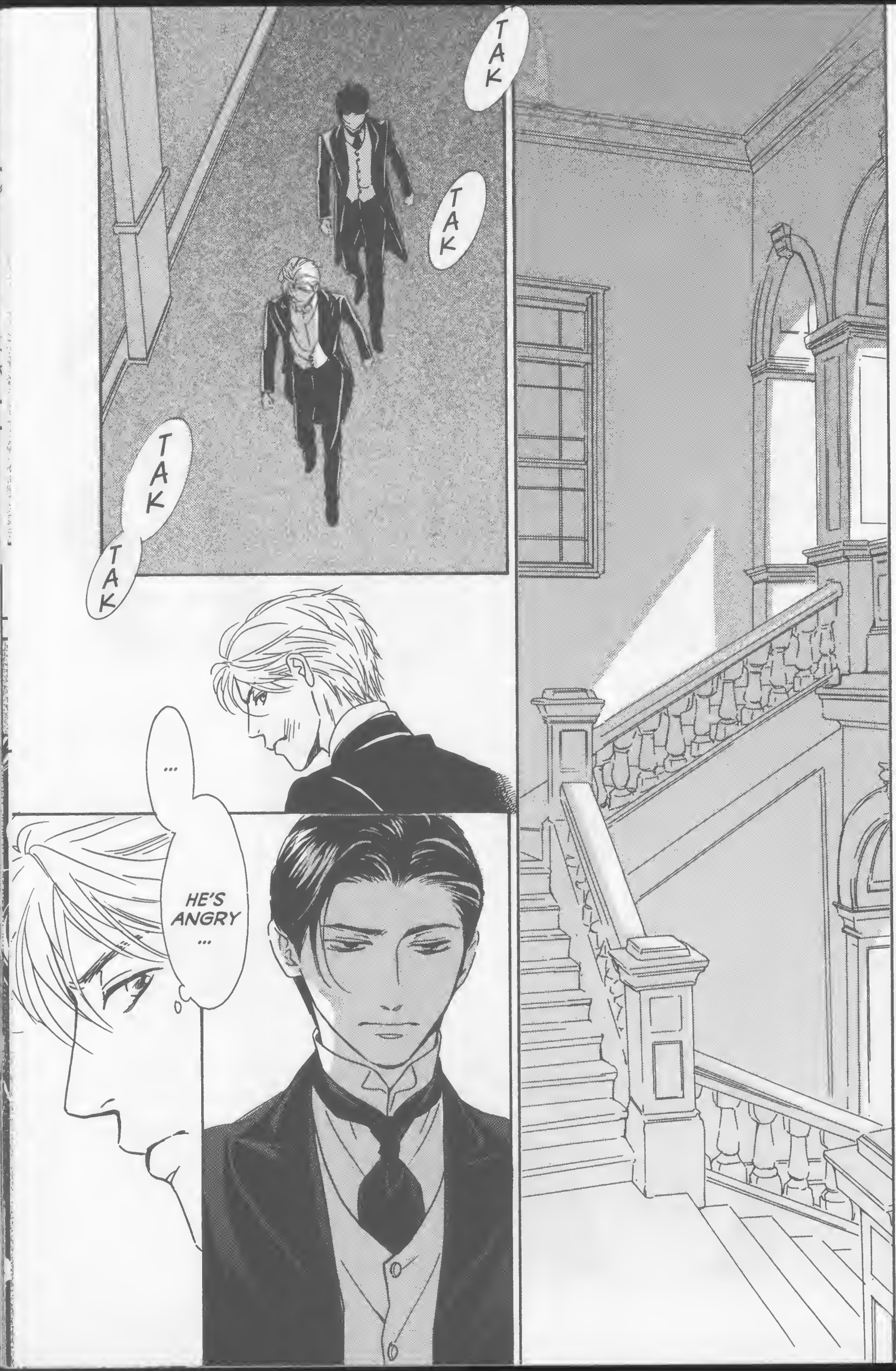

I DO THINK THAT TOMOYUKI'S SCHEME IS QUITE CLEVER, BUT WE DON'T KNOW HOW IT WILL PLAY OUT IN UNFORESEEN CIRCUM-STANCES.
THE PAWNS HE MOVES ARE OF A PRIVILEGED CLASS. HE UNDERSTANDS THIS TOO KEENLY WITH AN EGOTISTICAL PERSON SUCH AS MARQUISE MORIYAMA, BUT...
IN THE END...
IF YOU'RE REFERRING TO KATSURAGI'S ERROR EARLIER, YOU HAVE NO NEED TO WORRY.
IT'S ONLY WITH REGARD TO VISCOUNT AKIHITO. HE IS...SPECIAL.
...

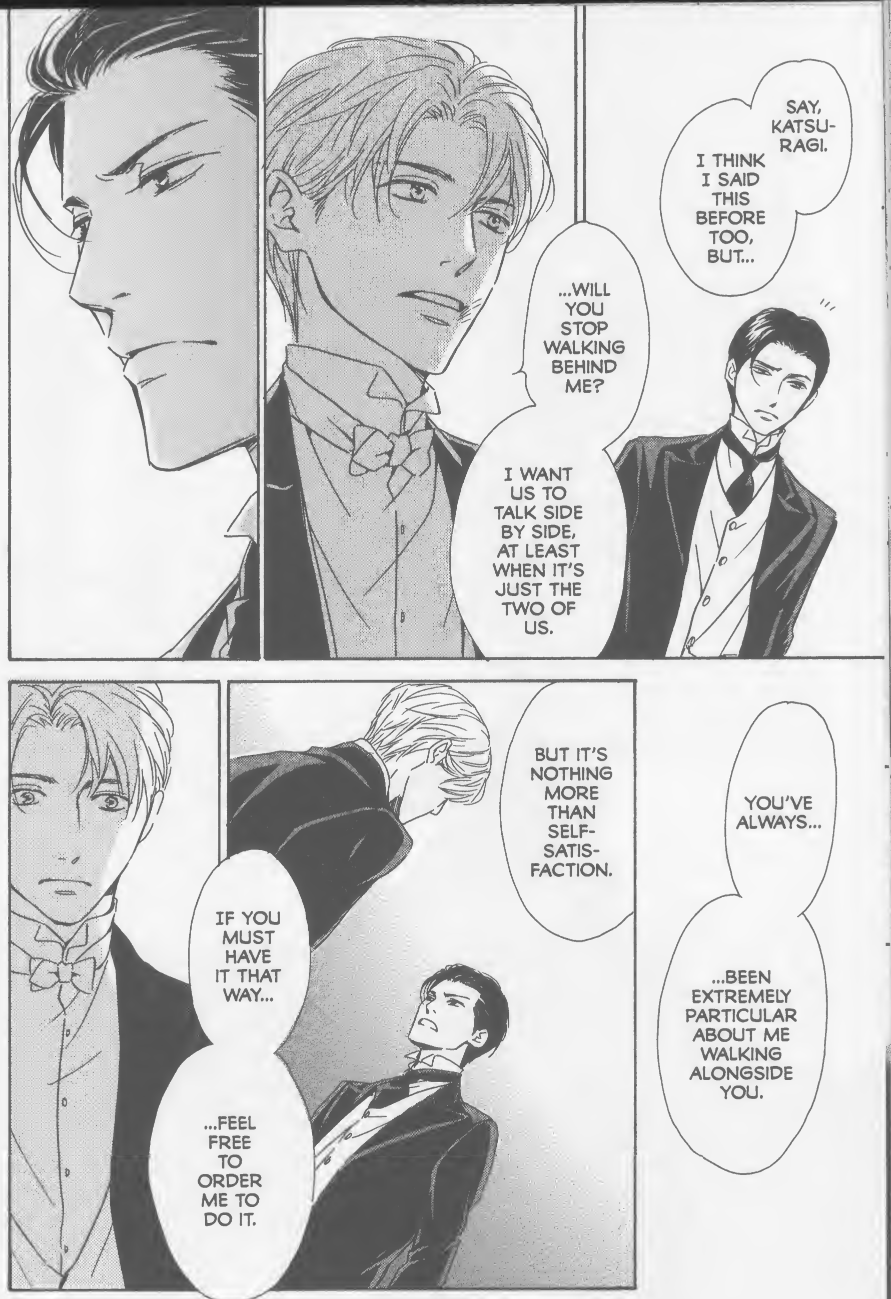

THAT'S TRUE.
IT'S ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THAT.
AND MY FATHER SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT AS WELL.
YOU SAID THAT YOU PUT ME IN THAT ACADEMY FILLED WITH NOBILITY SO THAT I COULD BECOME CLOSE WITH AKIHITO KUZE, DIDN'T YOU?!
THAT WE OWED A DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO THE KUZE HOUSE?!
...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF DEBT HE OWES THEM, BUT FATHER CAN'T SIMPLY WALK AWAY FROM A MEMBER OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THAT HE HAS KATSURAGI.
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, HE'LL PROTECT KUZE.
IN WHICH CASE, RATHER THAN BEING ANXIOUS ABOUT THESE BITS AND PIECES I KNOW ABOUT, I SHOULD JUST LEAVE IT TO HIM.

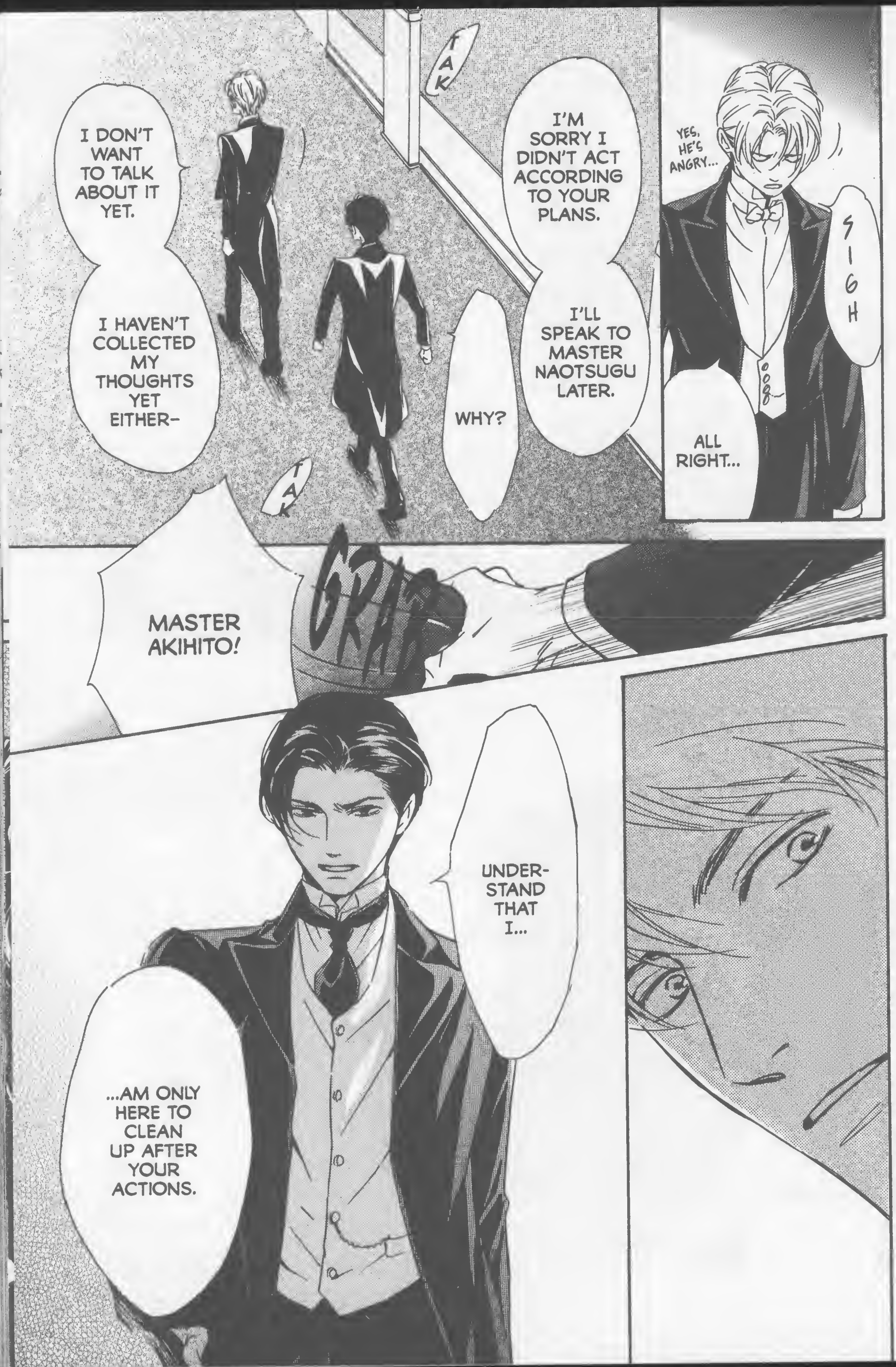

WHEN IT COMES TO KATSURAGI'S ATTACHMENT TO KUZE...
WELL, EITHER WAY, HE'S GOT HIS EYE ON THINGS TEN YEARS DOWN THE LINE.
WHAT WILL I EVEN BE DOING TEN YEARS FROM NOW?
MY BEING ABLE TO BE FRIENDS WITH KUZE...
KLATTER
...IS ONLY BECAUSE HE'S DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER NOBLES.
HE HAS EVEN MORE DOUBTS THAN I DO ABOUT THE CLASS SYSTEM. HE'S QUICK TO REJECT IT AS STUPID.
BUT...
I WAS SURPRISED AT KUZE IN THERE.
HIS BEARING IN THAT EVENING DRESS... HE WAS A TOTAL MASTER.
YOU WOULDN'T THINK WE'RE THE SAME AGE.

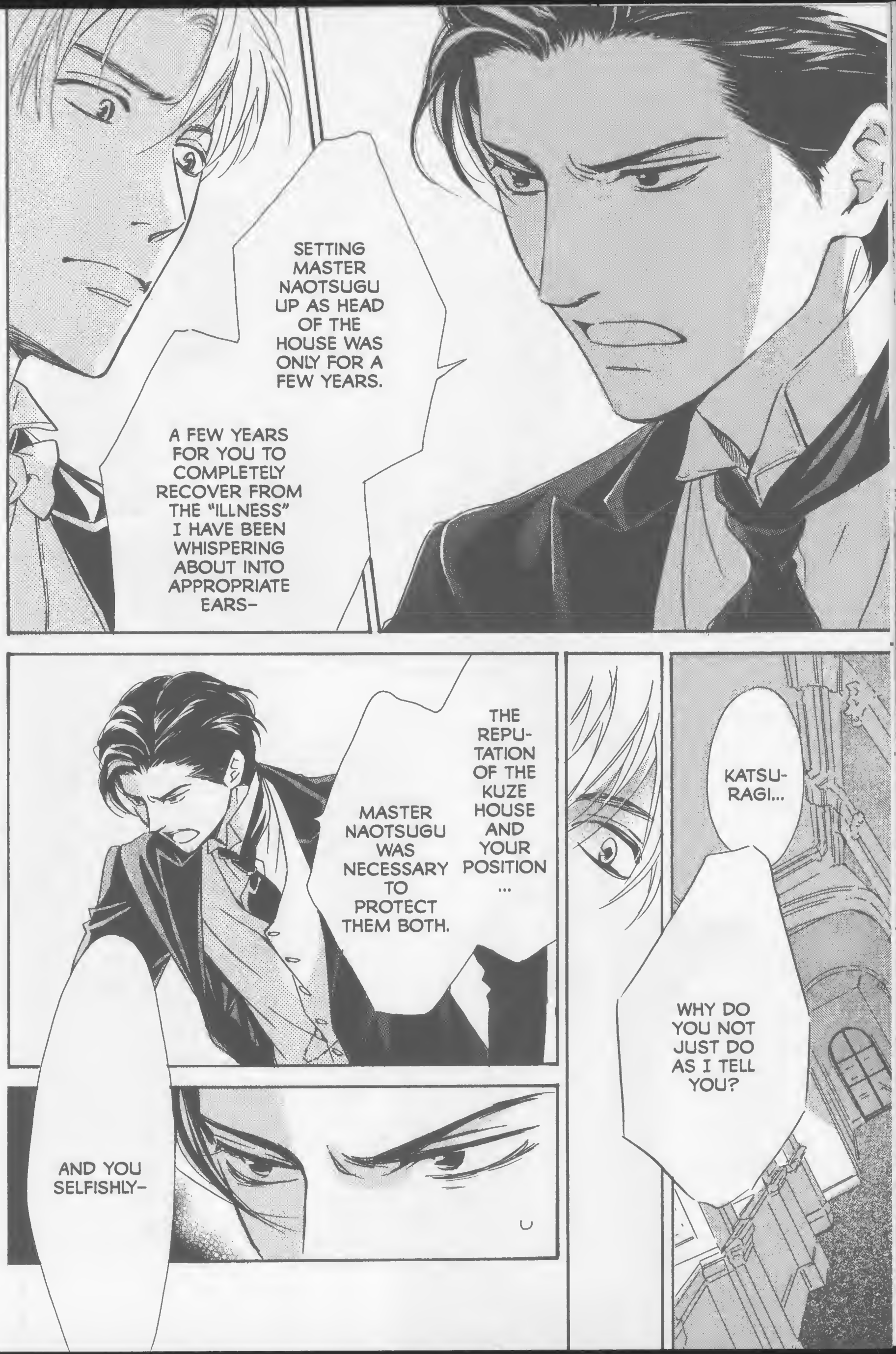

I DIDN'T KNOW IT...
...BUT HE'S BEEN FULFILLING HIS ROLE AS HEAD OF HIS HOUSE ALL THIS TIME.
HE'S ALWAYS SAYING HE NEEDS TO MAKE CONNECTIONS IN GOVERNMENT TO STIMULATE BUSINESS IN HIS OLD FIEF.
LATELY... YOU'RE JUST LIKE "THAT BORING LOT."
THAT BUTLER'S TOTALLY POISONED YOU.
I CAN'T BELIEVE I SAID THAT!
I WISH I COULD TAKE IT BACK!
...
KLATTER
TAKAYUKI KATSURAGI.

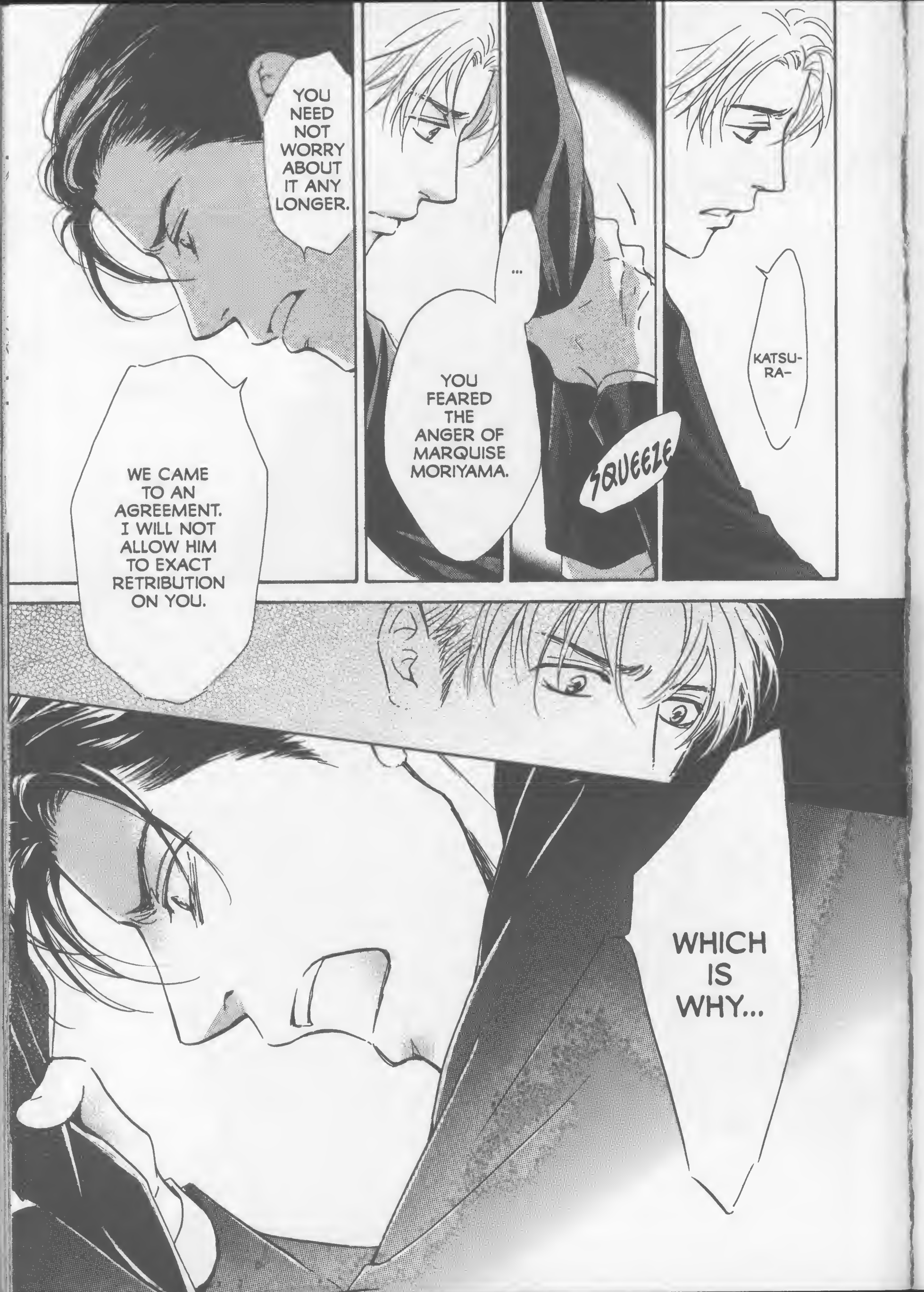

I WOULD LIKE TO OFFER MY SINCEREST APOLOGIES FOR EARLIER.
I WON'T CAUSE YOU ANY TROUBLE.
IF POSSIBLE, I'D LIKE FOR YOU TO PLEASE TELL ME WHAT KATSURAGI IS THINKING AND WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO THAT HOUSE.
...

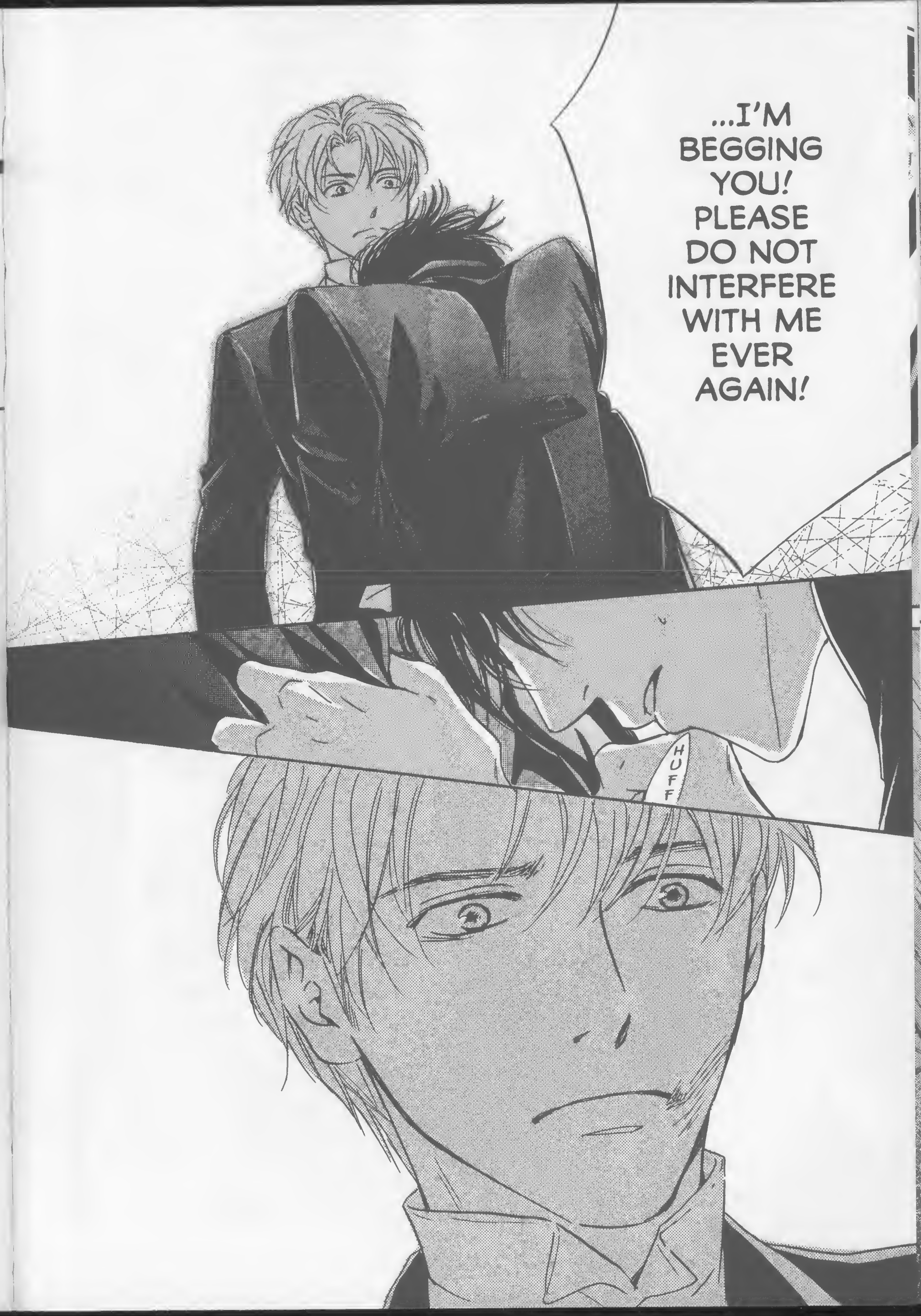

TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
...
HE'S ANGRY ...

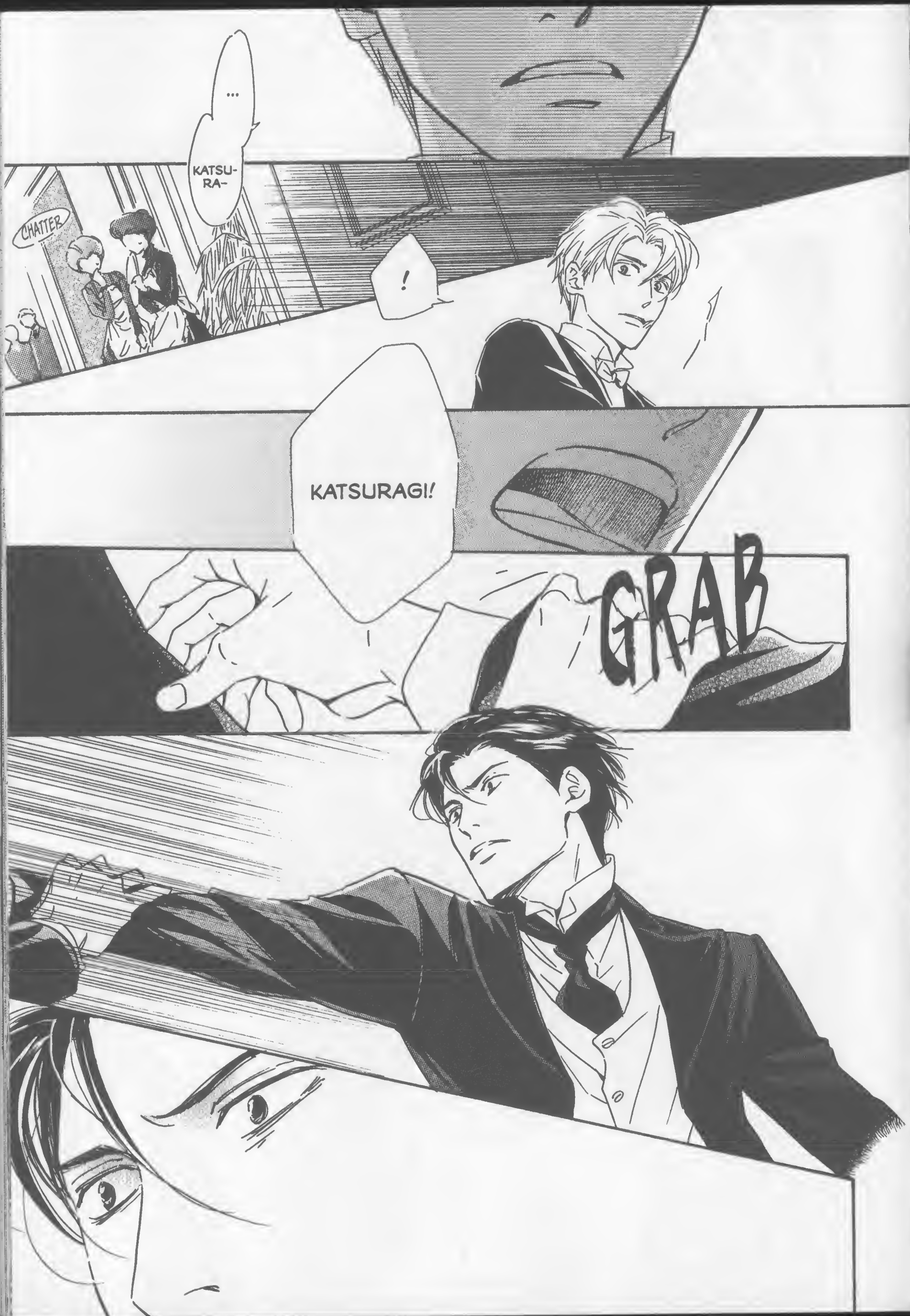

SAY, KATSURAGI.
I THINK I SAID THIS BEFORE TOO, BUT...
...WILL YOU STOP WALKING BEHIND ME?
I WANT US TO TALK SIDE BY SIDE, AT LEAST WHEN IT'S JUST THE TWO OF US.
YOU'VE ALWAYS...
...BEEN EXTREMELY PARTICULAR ABOUT ME WALKING ALONGSIDE YOU.
BUT IT'S NOTHING MORE THAN SELF-SATISFACTION.
IF YOU MUST HAVE IT THAT WAY...
...FEEL FREE TO ORDER ME TO DO IT.

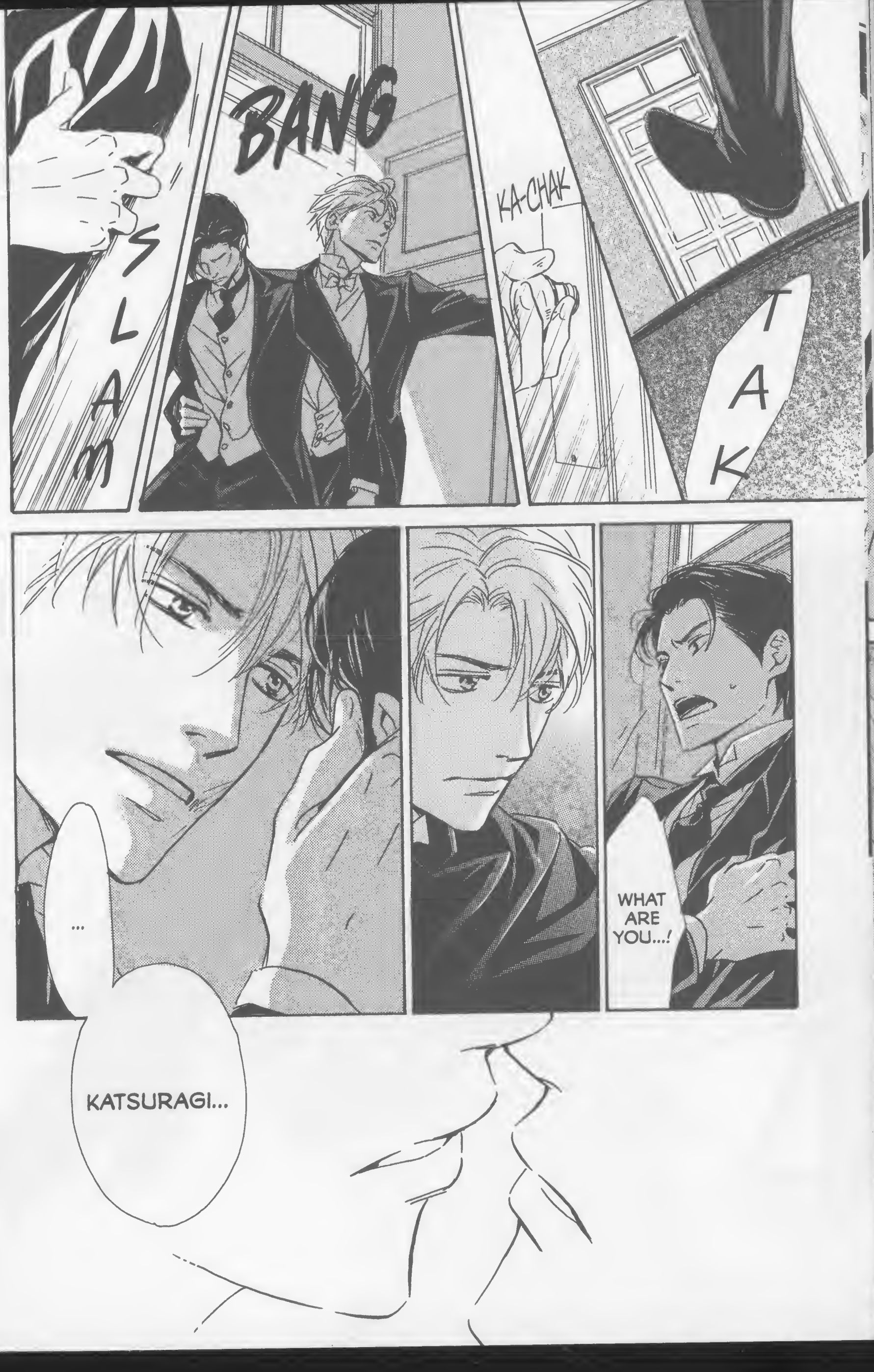

YES, HE'S ANGRY...
SIGH
ALL RIGHT...
I'M SORRY I DIDN'T ACT ACCORDING TO YOUR PLANS.
TAK
I'LL SPEAK TO MASTER NAOTSUGU LATER.
WHY?
I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT YET.
I HAVEN'T COLLECTED MY THOUGHTS YET EITHER-
TAK
GRAB
MASTER AKIHITO!
UNDERSTAND THAT I...
...AM ONLY HERE TO CLEAN UP AFTER YOUR ACTIONS.

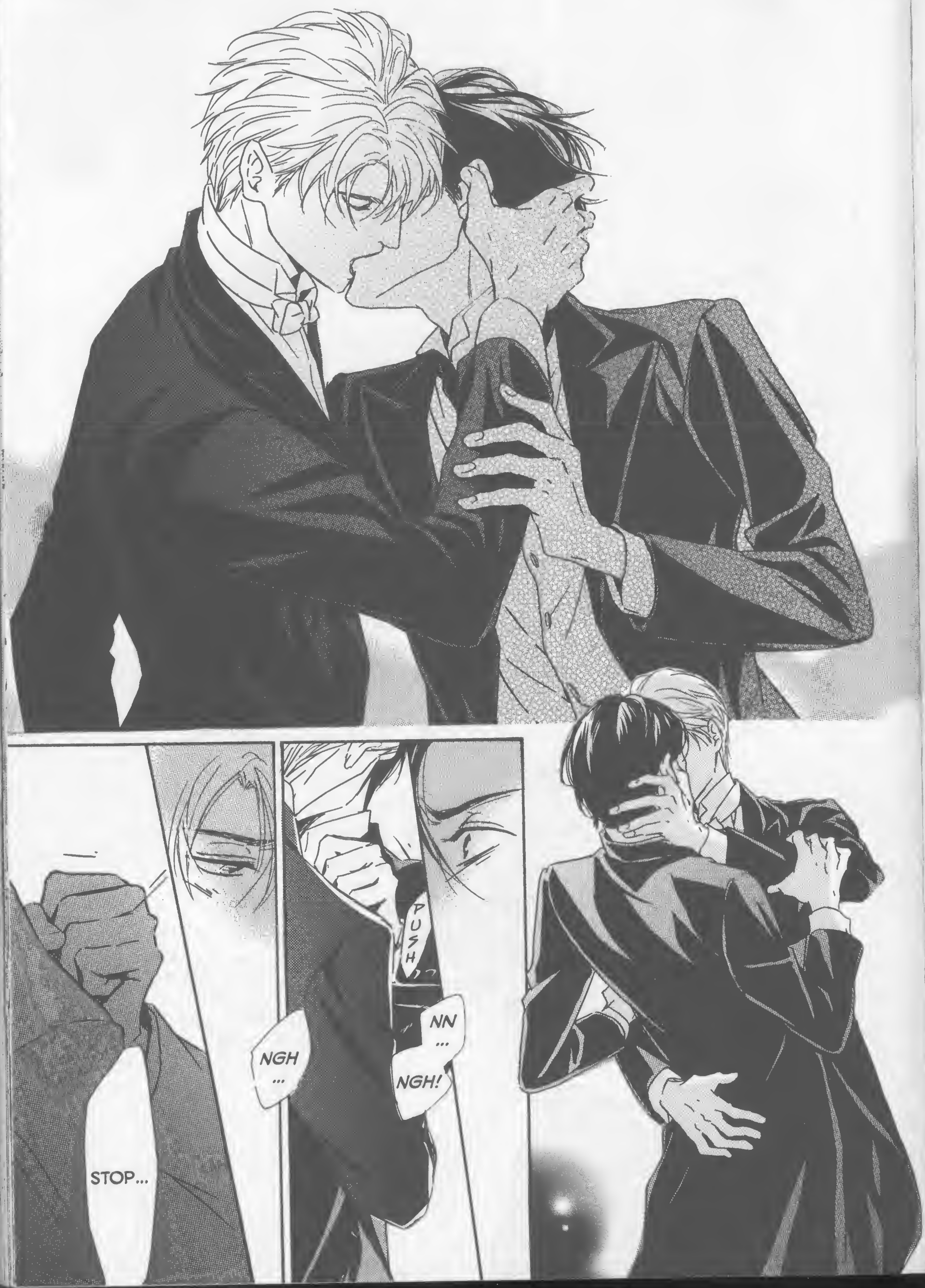

SETTING MASTER NAOTSUGU UP AS HEAD OF THE HOUSE WAS ONLY FOR A FEW YEARS.
A FEW YEARS FOR YOU TO COMPLETELY RECOVER FROM THE "ILLNESS" I HAVE BEEN WHISPERING ABOUT INTO APPROPRIATE EARS–
KATSURAGI...
WHY DO YOU NOT JUST DO AS I TELL YOU?
THE REPUTATION OF THE KUZE HOUSE AND YOUR POSITION...
MASTER NAOTSUGU WAS NECESSARY TO PROTECT THEM BOTH.
AND YOU SELFISHLY–

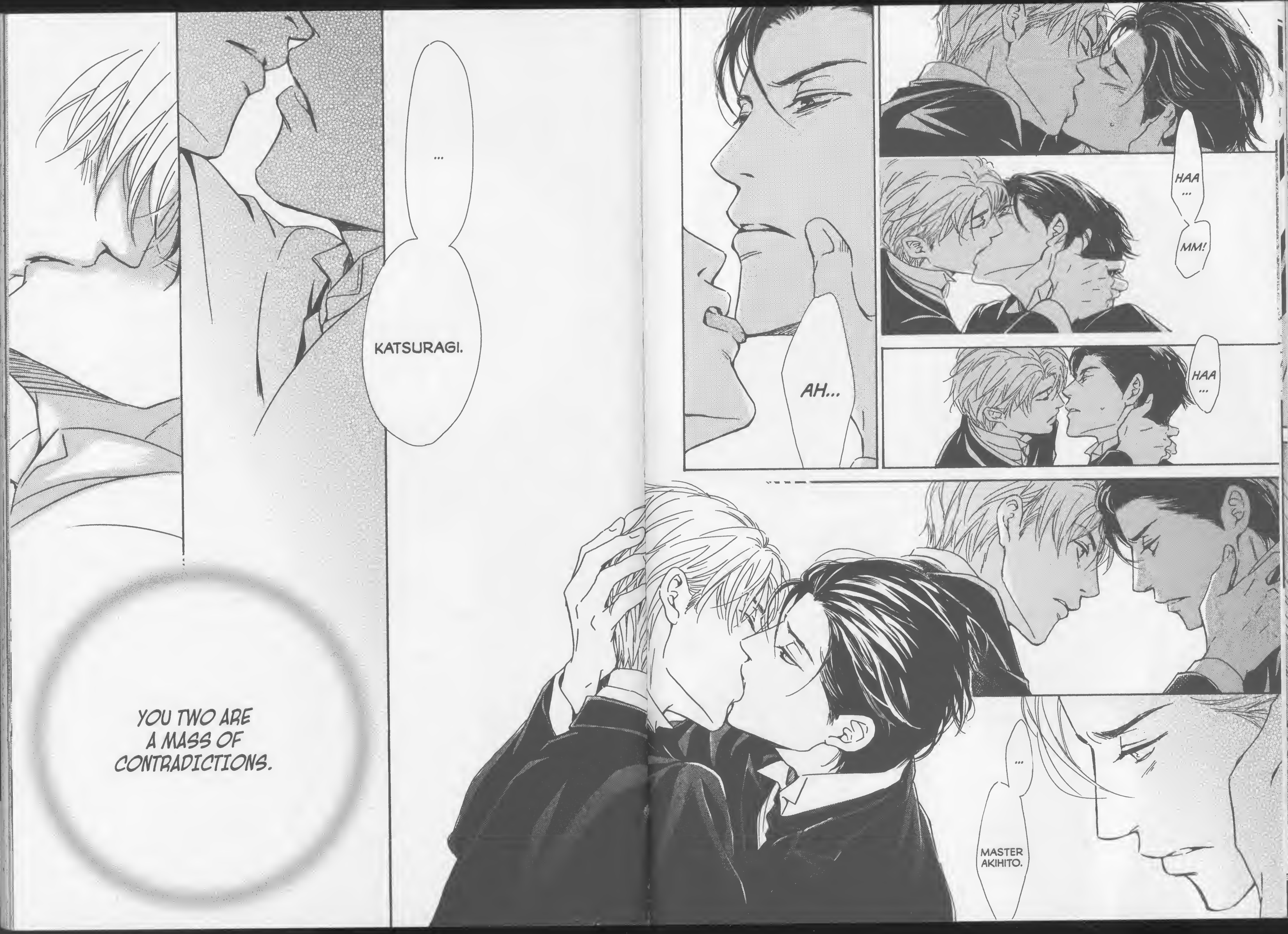

KATSURA–
SQUEEZE
...
YOU FEARED THE ANGER OF MARQUISE MORIYAMA.
YOU NEED NOT WORRY ABOUT IT ANY LONGER.
WE CAME TO AN AGREEMENT. I WILL NOT ALLOW HIM TO EXACT RETRIBUTION ON YOU.
WHICH IS WHY...

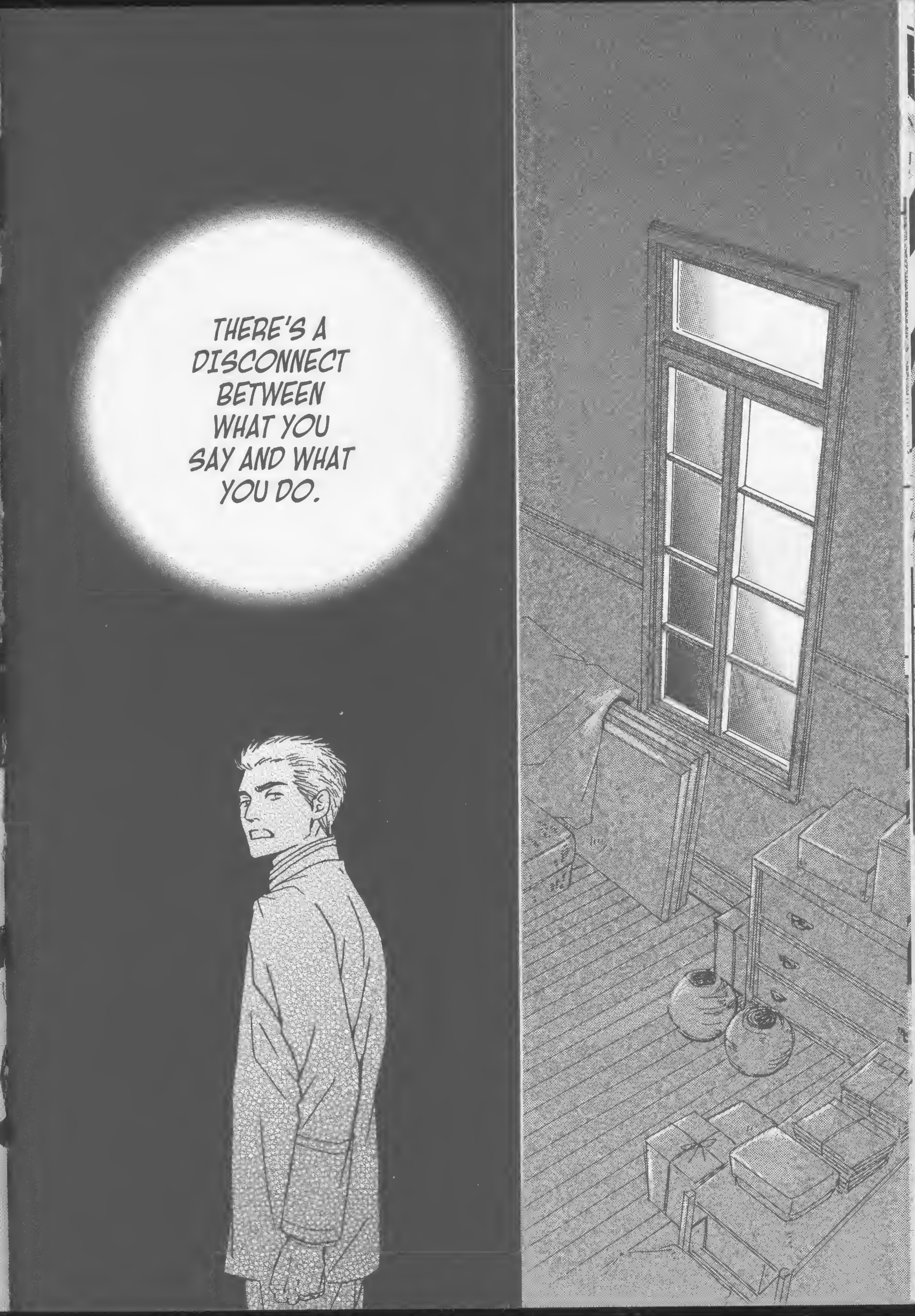

...I'M BEGGING YOU! PLEASE DO NOT INTERFERE WITH ME EVER AGAIN!
HUFF

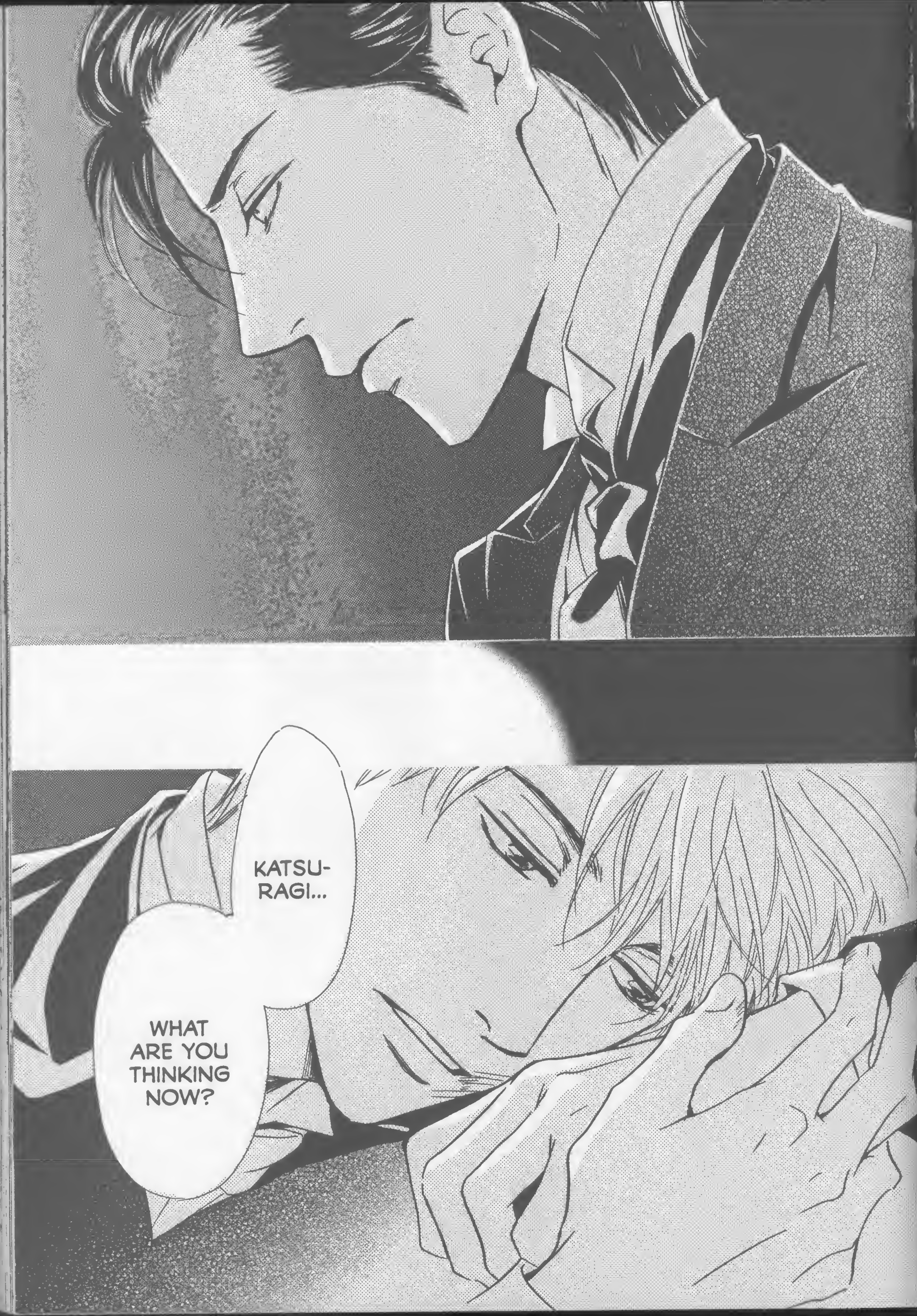

...
KATSURA-
CHATTER
!
KATSURAGI!
GRAB

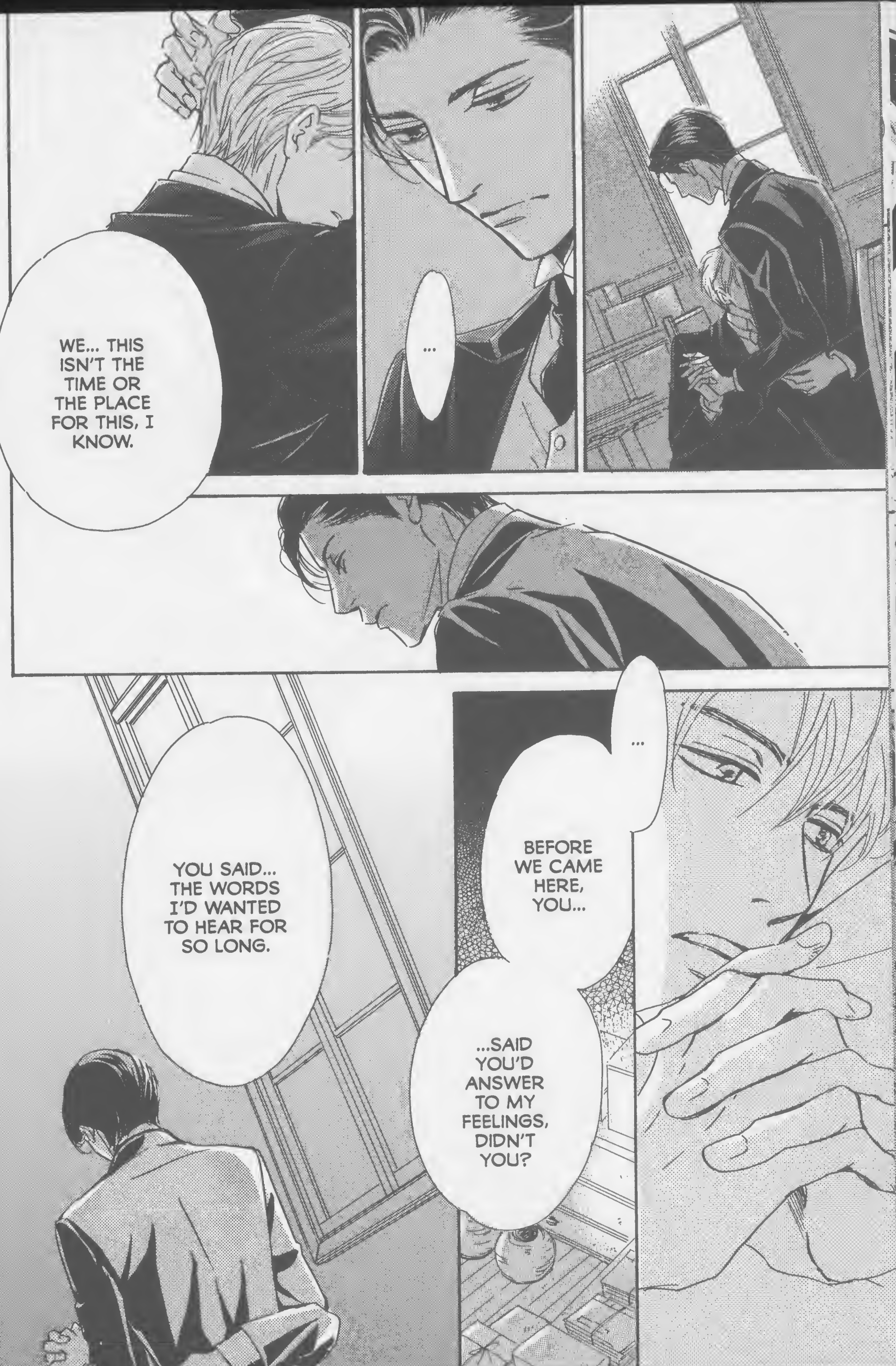

TAK
KA-CHAK
BANG
SLAM
WHAT ARE YOU...!
...
KATSURAGI...

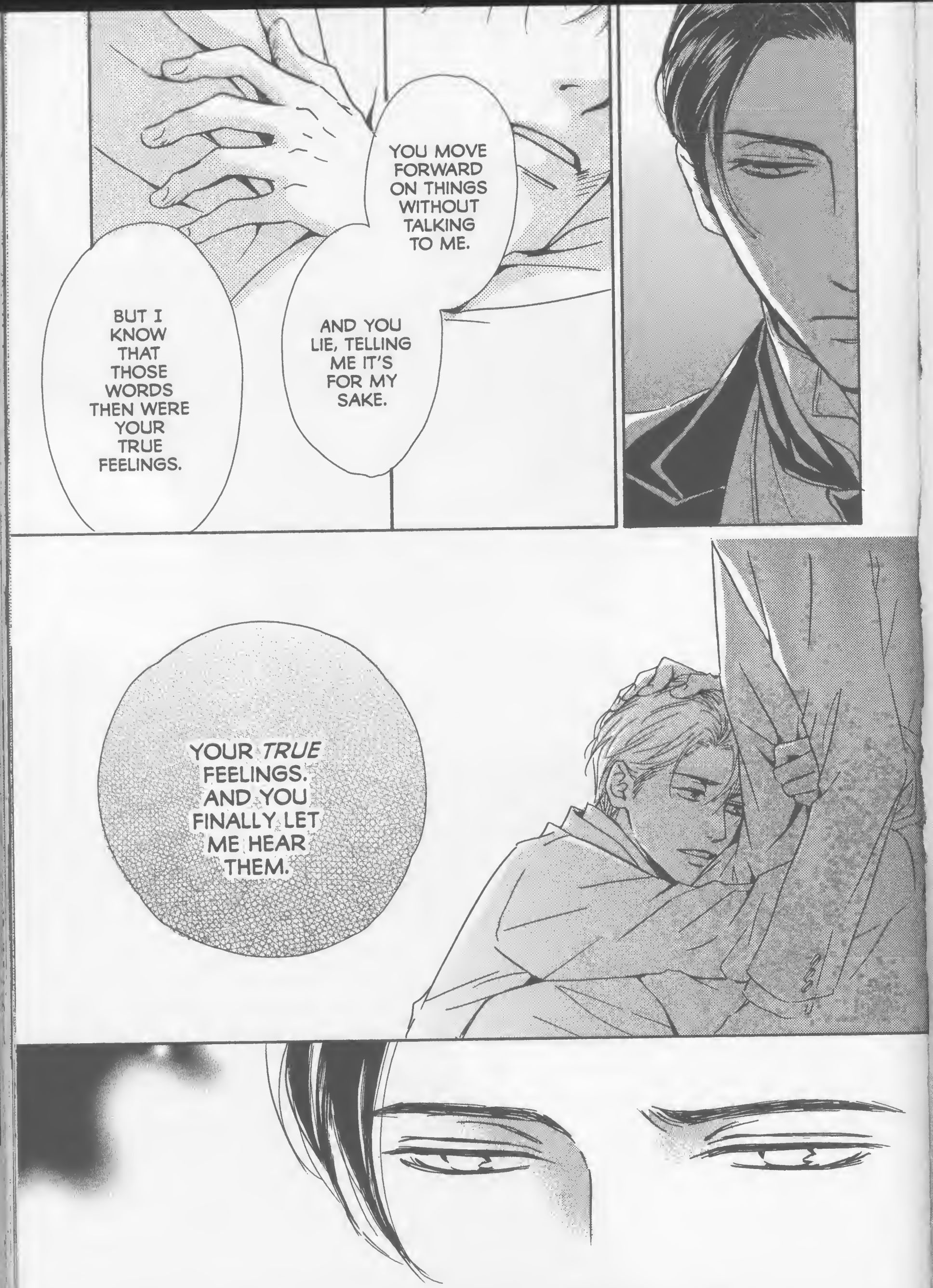

NN...
NGH!
PUSH
NGH...
STOP...

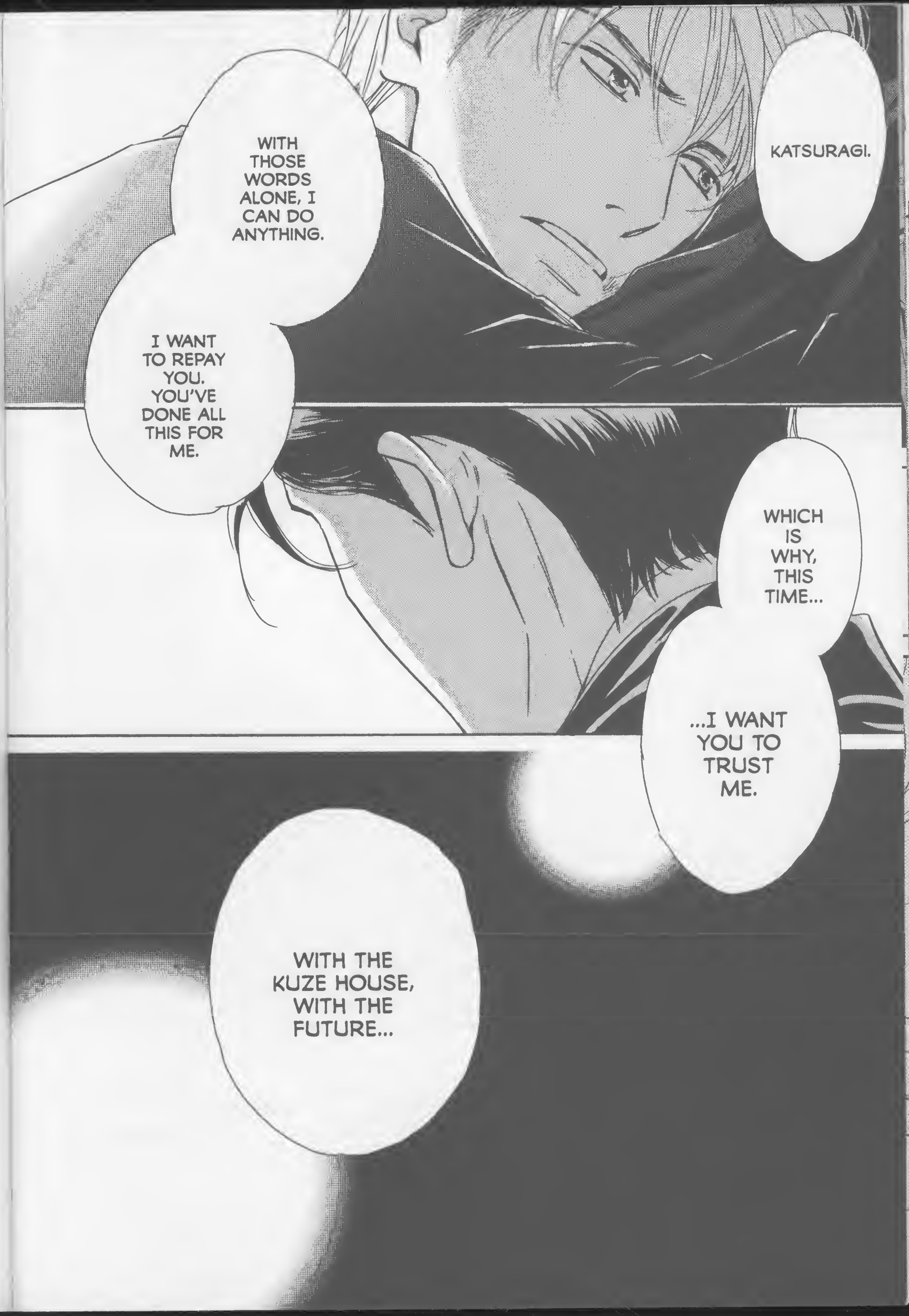

HAA … MM!
HAA …
AH…
…
MASTER AKIHITO.
…
KATSURAGI.
YOU TWO ARE A MASS OF CONTRADICTIONS.

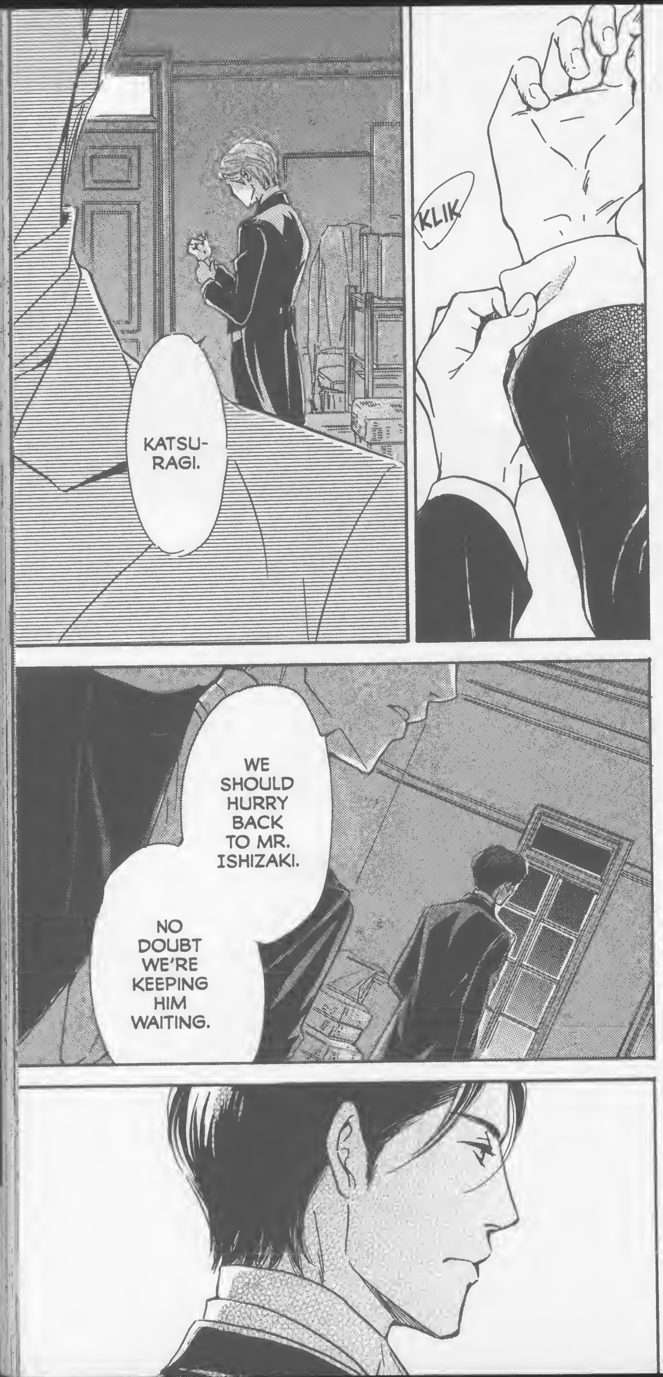

THERE'S A DISCONNECT BETWEEN WHAT YOU SAY AND WHAT YOU DO.

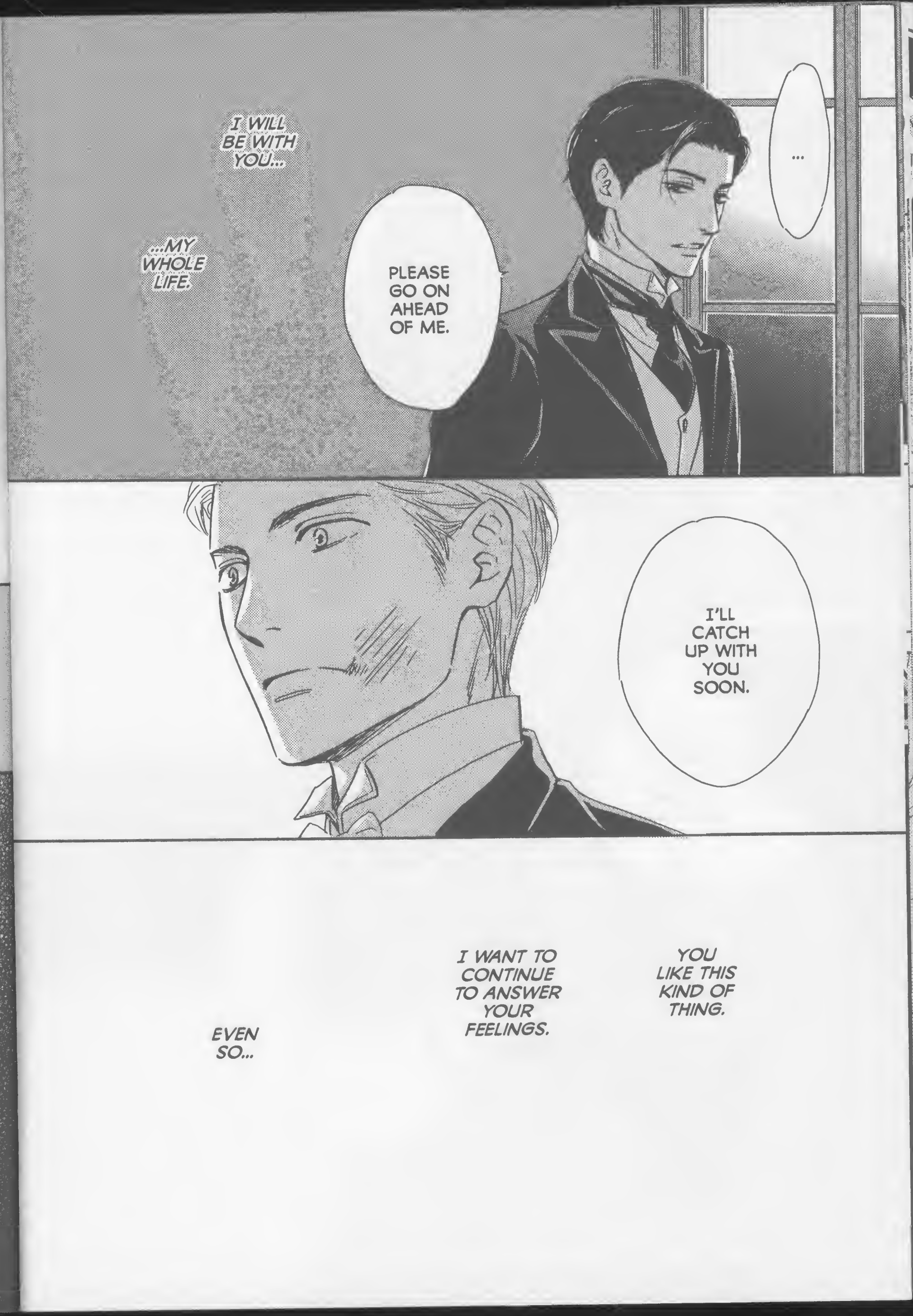

KATSU-RAGI...
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING NOW?

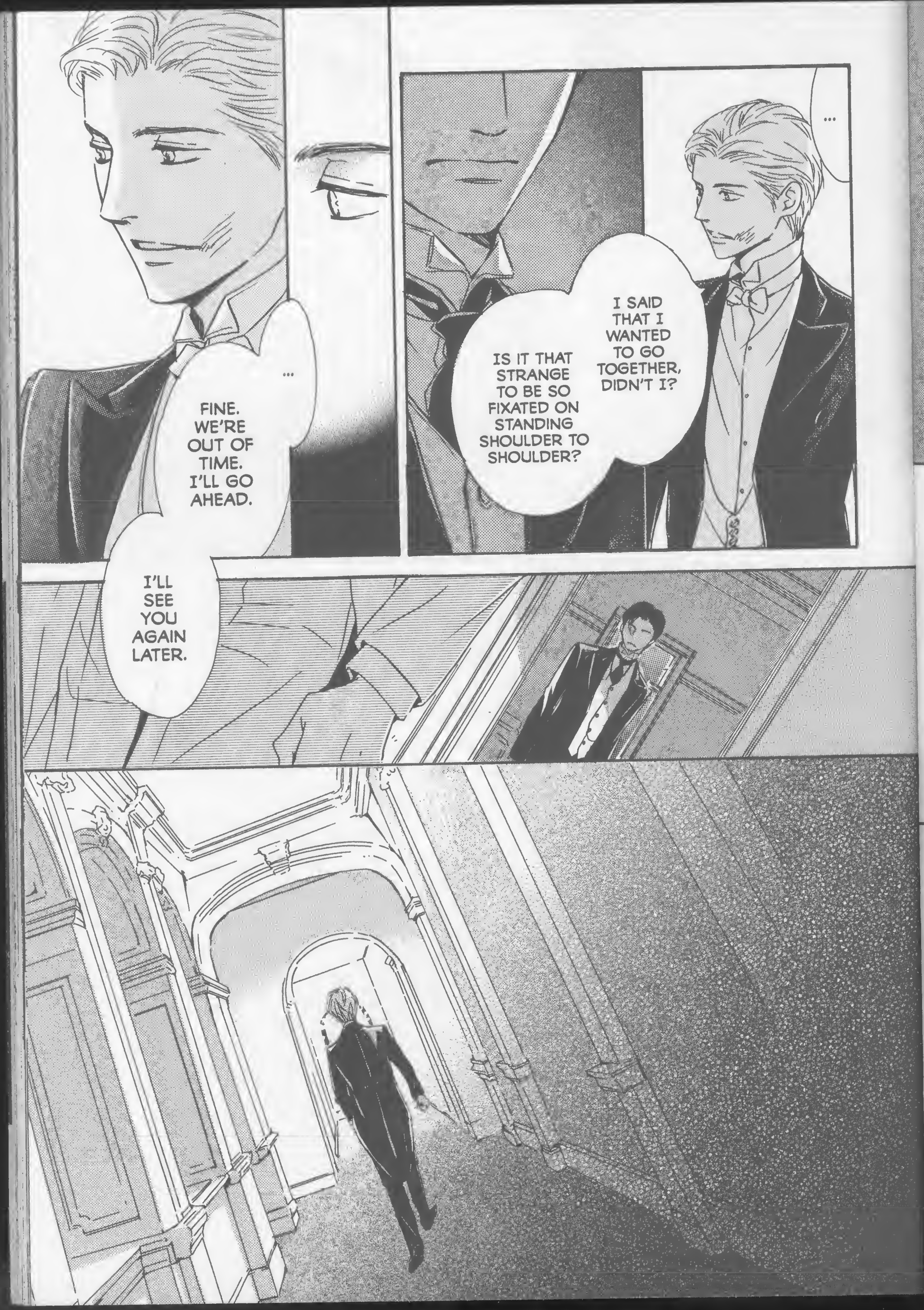

...
WE... THIS ISN'T THE TIME OR THE PLACE FOR THIS, I KNOW.
...
BEFORE WE CAME HERE, YOU...
...SAID YOU'D ANSWER TO MY FEELINGS, DIDN'T YOU?
YOU SAID... THE WORDS I'D WANTED TO HEAR FOR SO LONG.

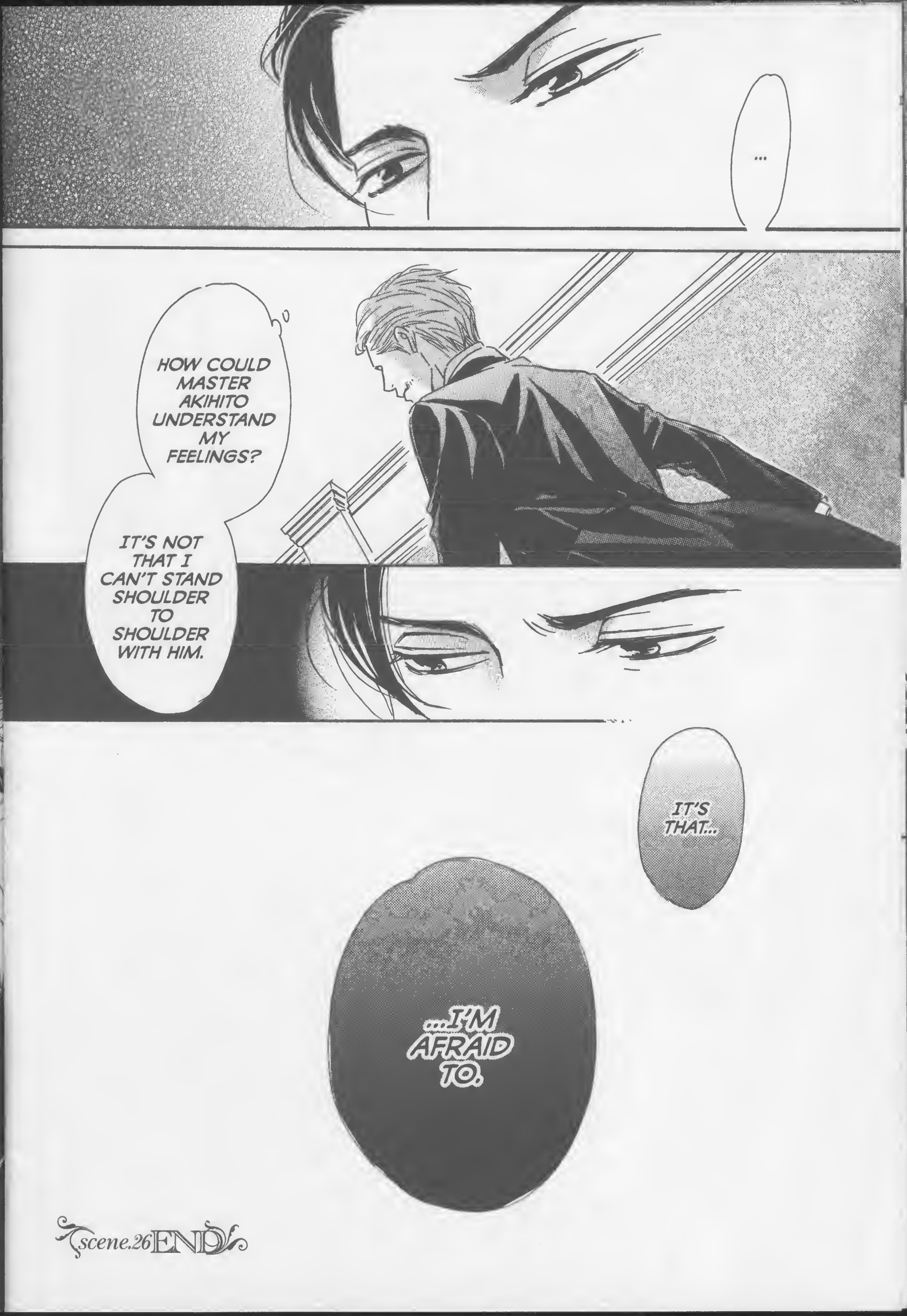

YOU MOVE FORWARD ON THINGS WITHOUT TALKING TO ME.
AND YOU LIE, TELLING ME IT'S FOR MY SAKE.
BUT I KNOW THAT THOSE WORDS THEN WERE YOUR TRUE FEELINGS.
YOUR *TRUE* FEELINGS. AND YOU FINALLY LET ME HEAR THEM.

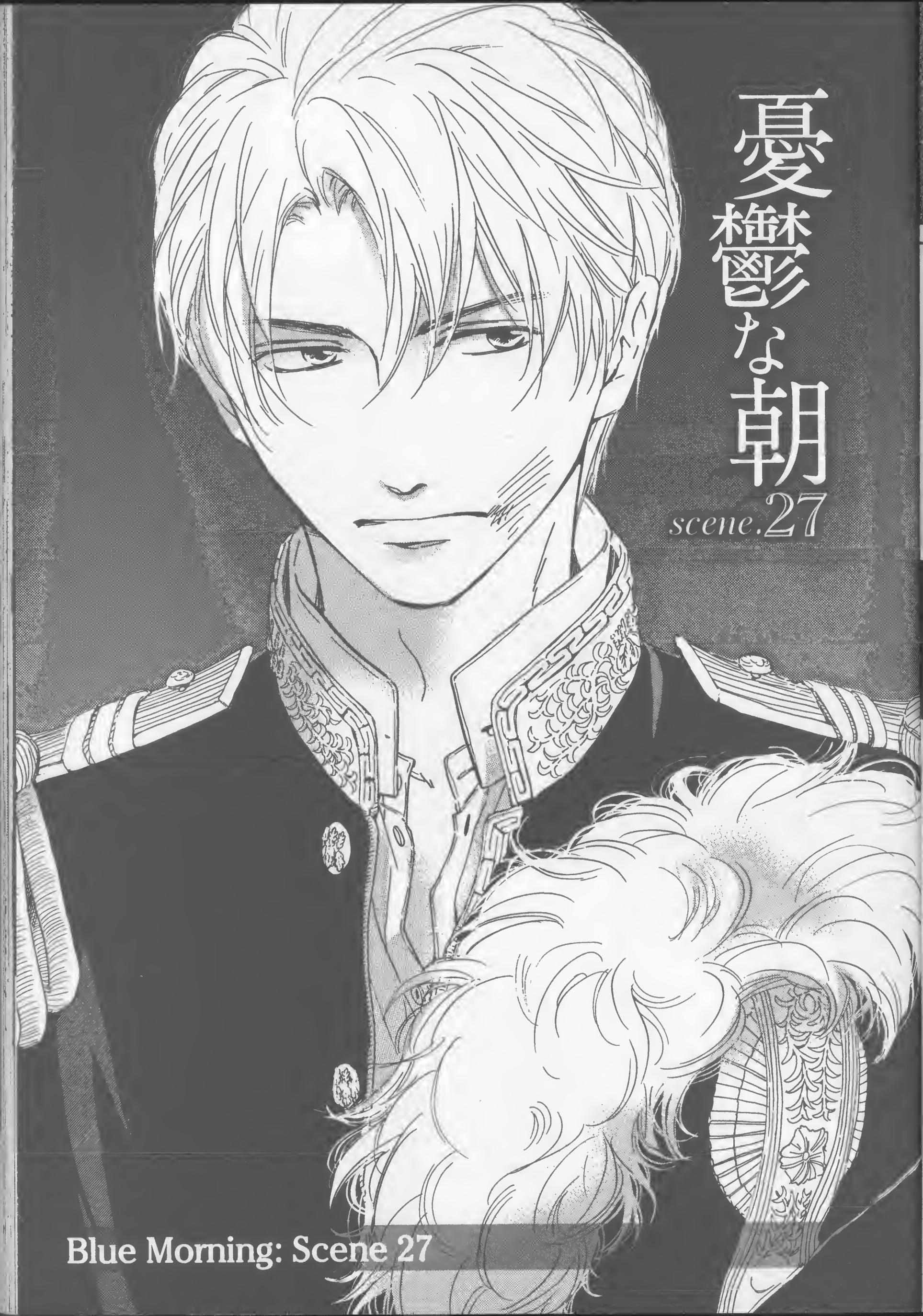

KATSURAGI.
WITH THOSE WORDS ALONE, I CAN DO ANYTHING.
I WANT TO REPAY YOU. YOU'VE DONE ALL THIS FOR ME.
WHICH IS WHY, THIS TIME...
...I WANT YOU TO TRUST ME.
WITH THE KUZE HOUSE, WITH THE FUTURE...


KLIK
KATSURAGI.
WE SHOULD HURRY BACK TO MR. ISHIZAKI.
NO DOUBT WE'RE KEEPING HIM WAITING.

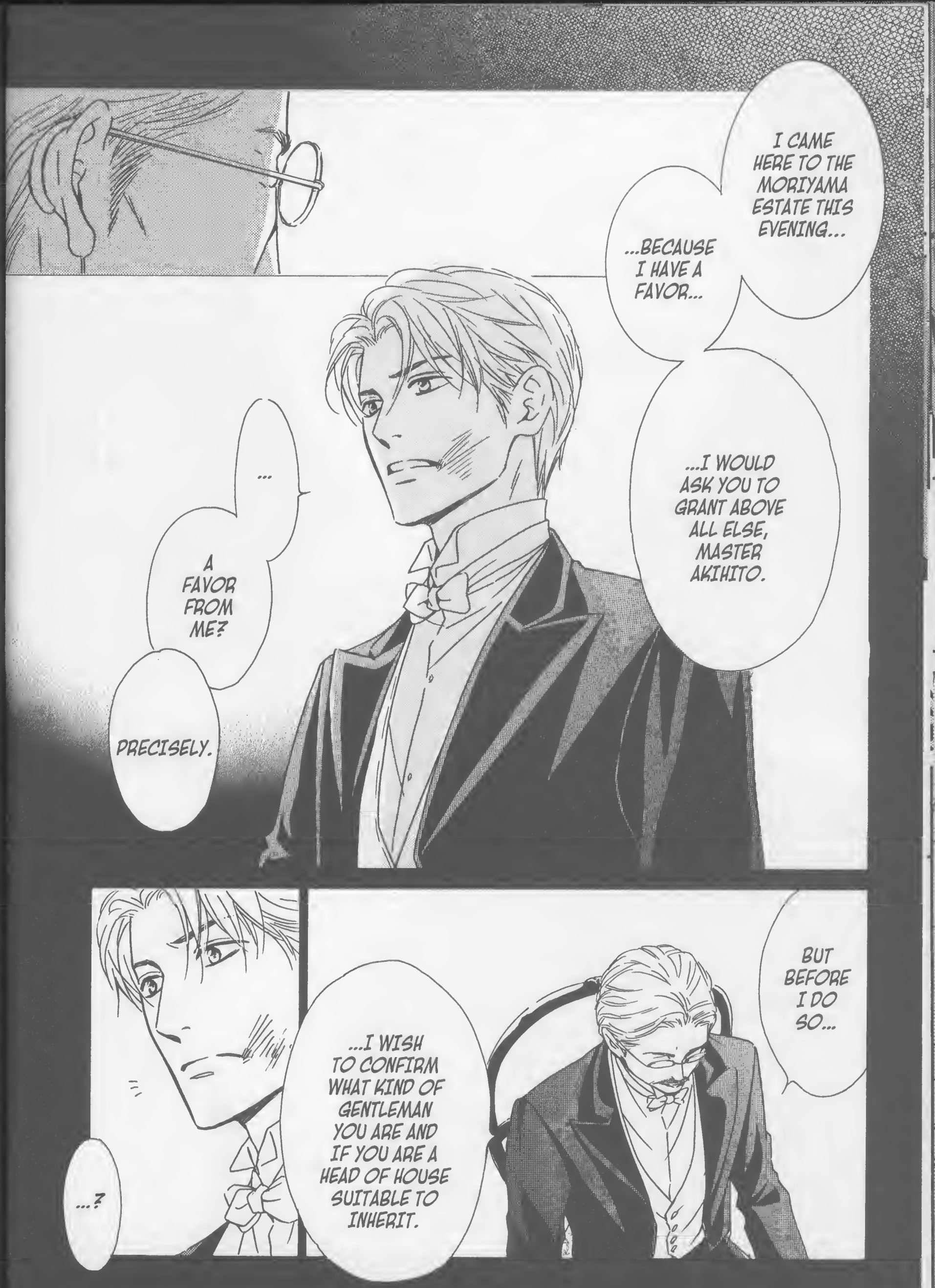

...
PLEASE GO ON AHEAD OF ME.
I WILL BE WITH YOU...
...MY WHOLE LIFE.
I'LL CATCH UP WITH YOU SOON.
YOU LIKE THIS KIND OF THING.
I WANT TO CONTINUE TO ANSWER YOUR FEELINGS.
EVEN SO...

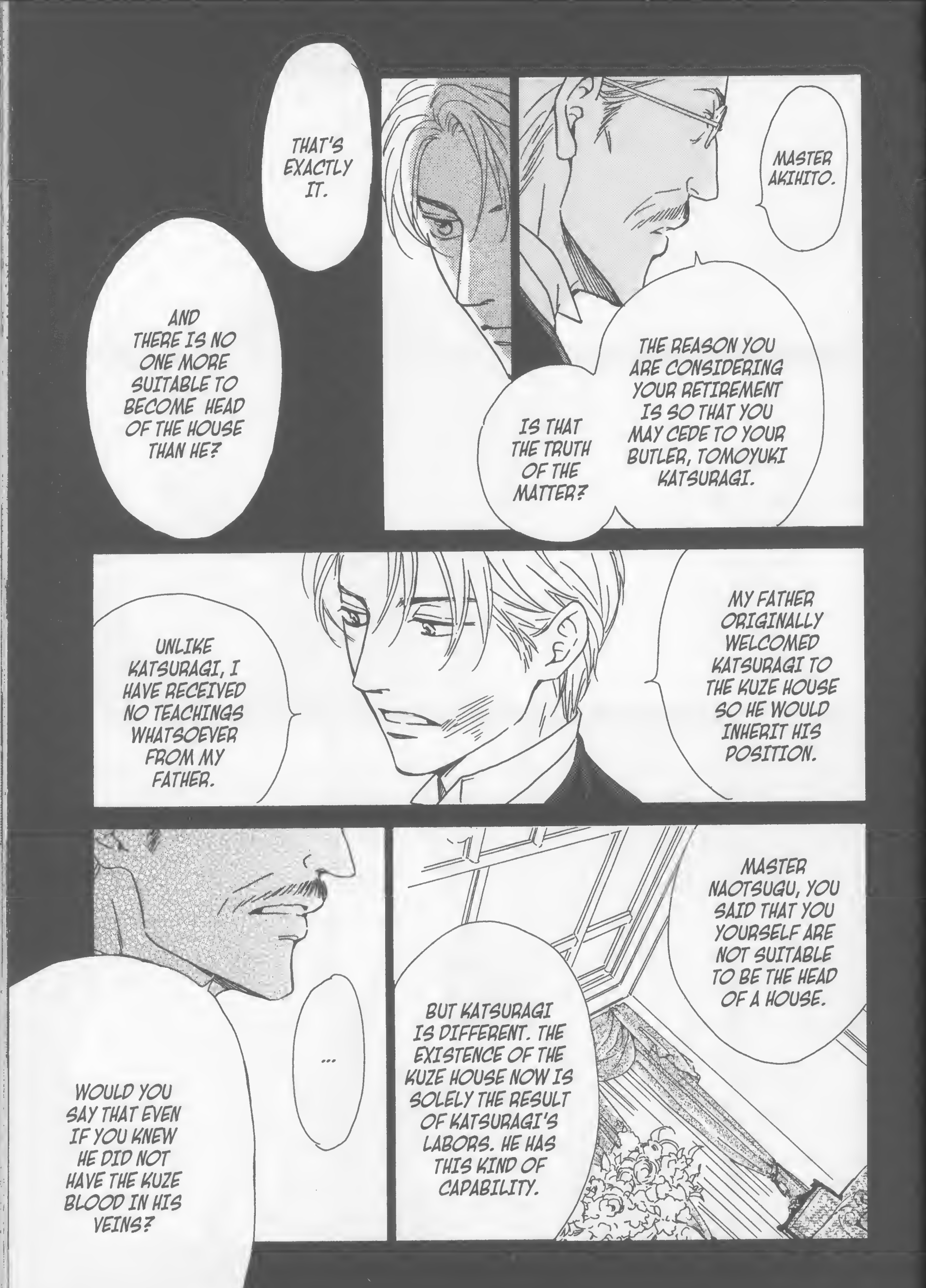

...
I SAID THAT I WANTED TO GO TOGETHER, DIDN'T I?
IS IT THAT STRANGE TO BE SO FIXATED ON STANDING SHOULDER TO SHOULDER?
...
FINE. WE'RE OUT OF TIME. I'LL GO AHEAD.
I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN LATER.

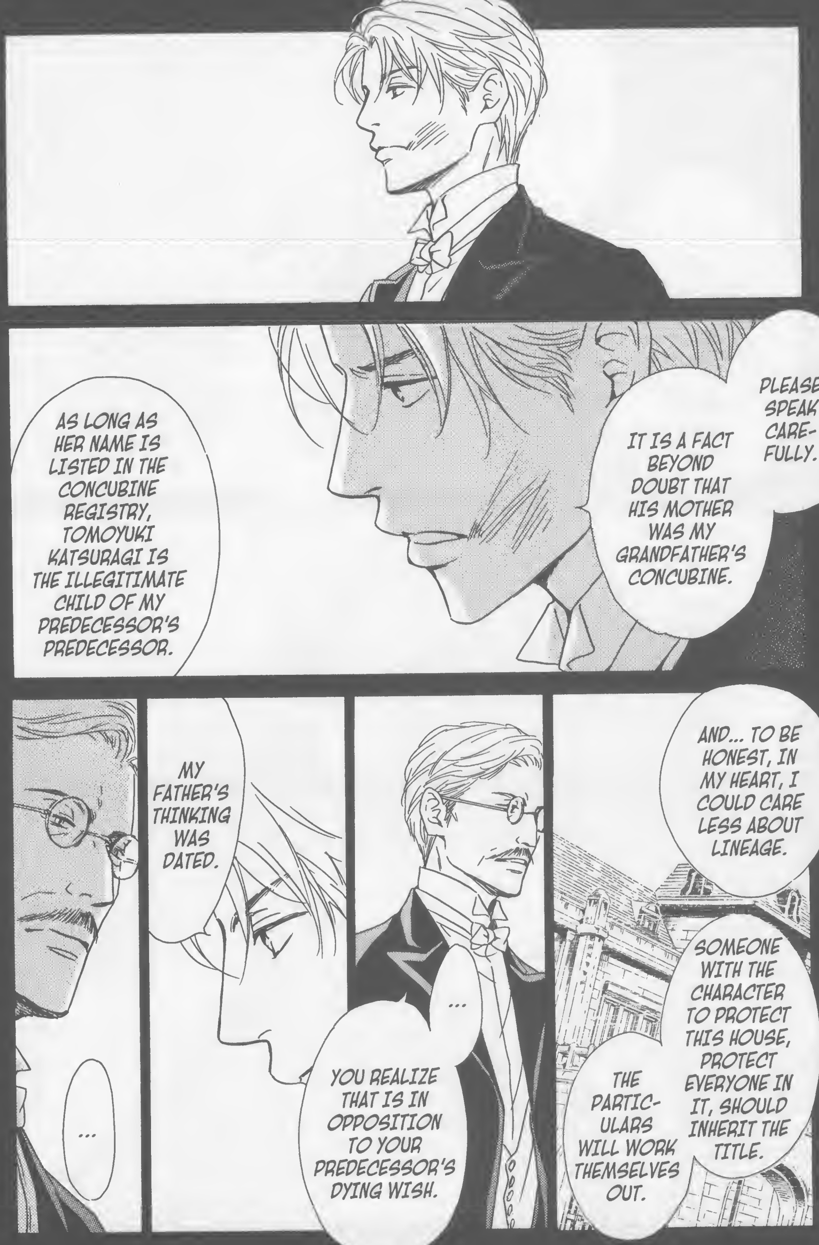

...
HOW COULD MASTER AKIHITO UNDERSTAND MY FEELINGS?
IT'S NOT THAT I CAN'T STAND SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH HIM.
IT'S THAT...
...I'M AFRAID TO.
scene.26 END

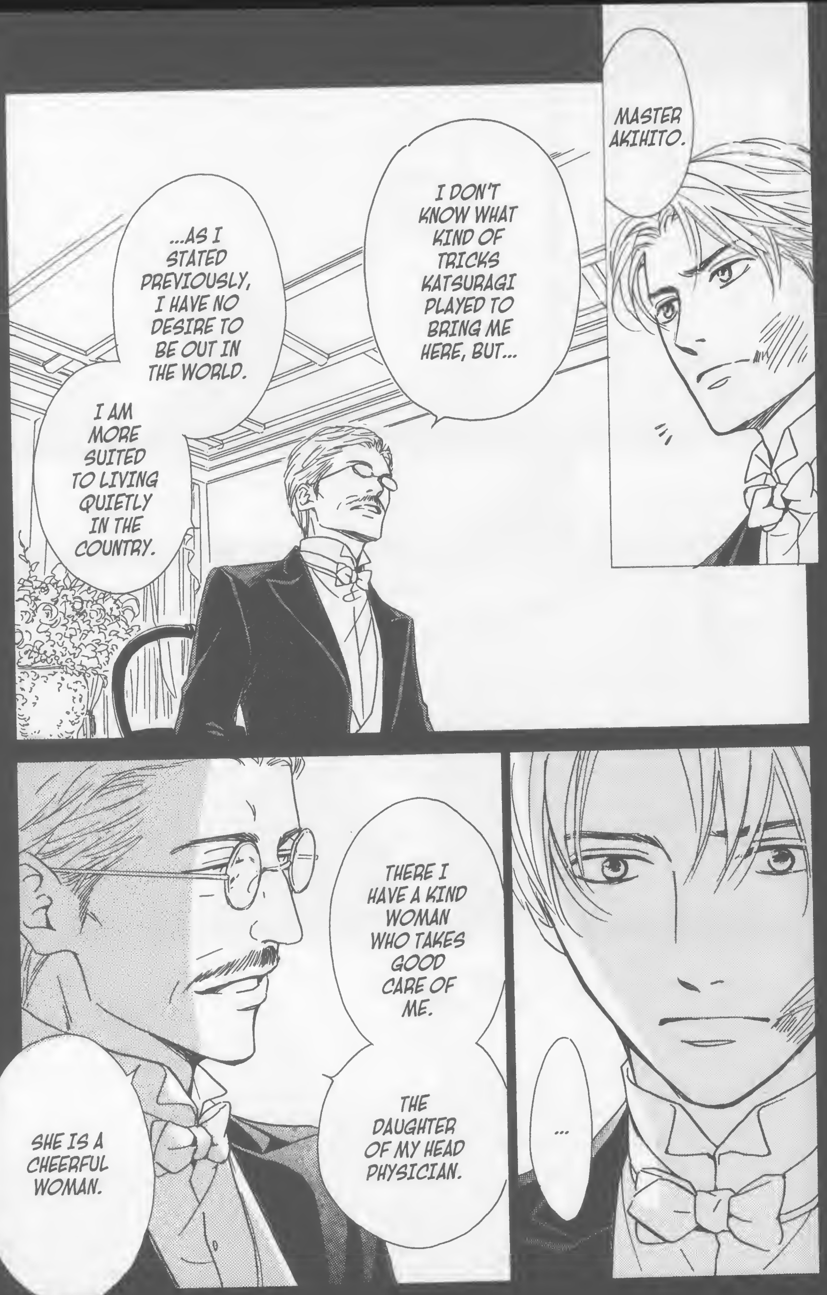

憂鬱な朝
scene.27

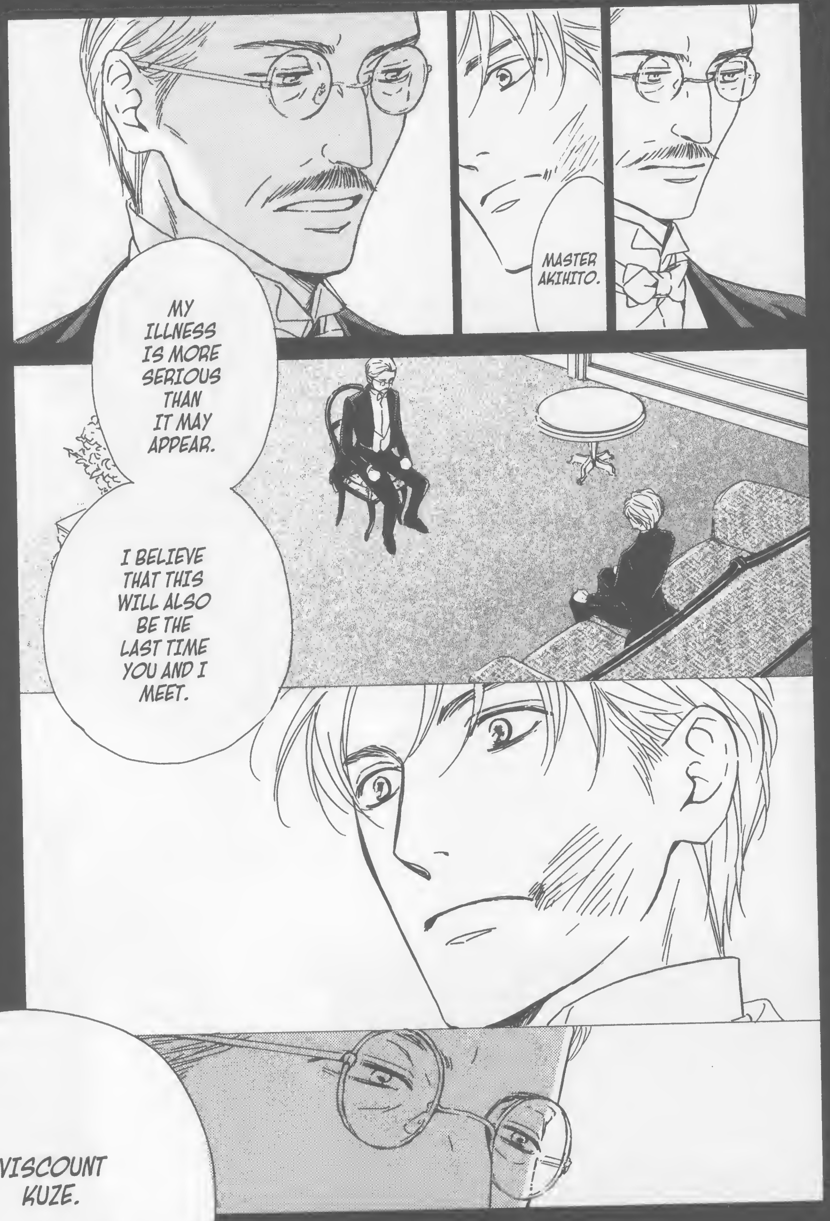
Blue Morning: Scene 27

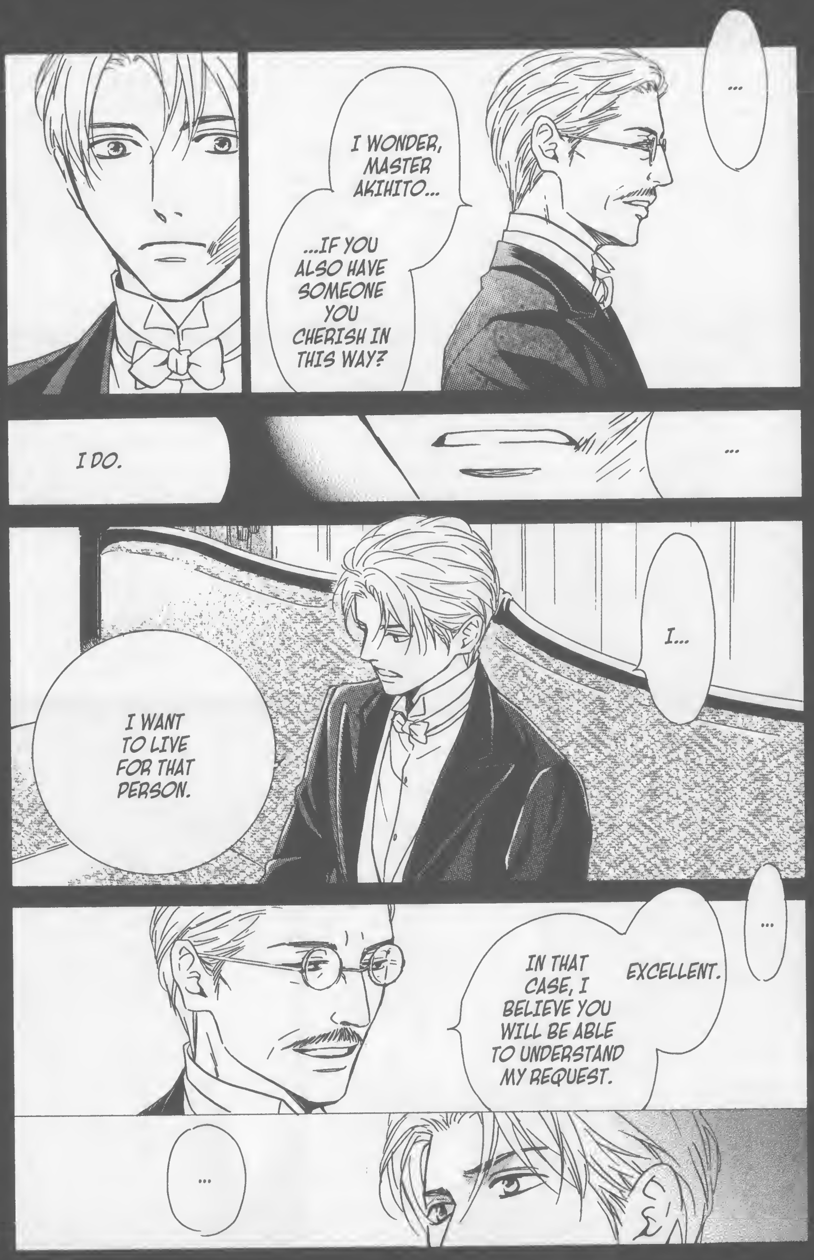

I CAME HERE TO THE MORIYAMA ESTATE THIS EVENING...
...BECAUSE I HAVE A FAVOR...
...I WOULD ASK YOU TO GRANT ABOVE ALL ELSE, MASTER AKIHITO.
...
A FAVOR FROM ME?
PRECISELY.
BUT BEFORE I DO SO...
...I WISH TO CONFIRM WHAT KIND OF GENTLEMAN YOU ARE AND IF YOU ARE A HEAD OF HOUSE SUITABLE TO INHERIT.
...?

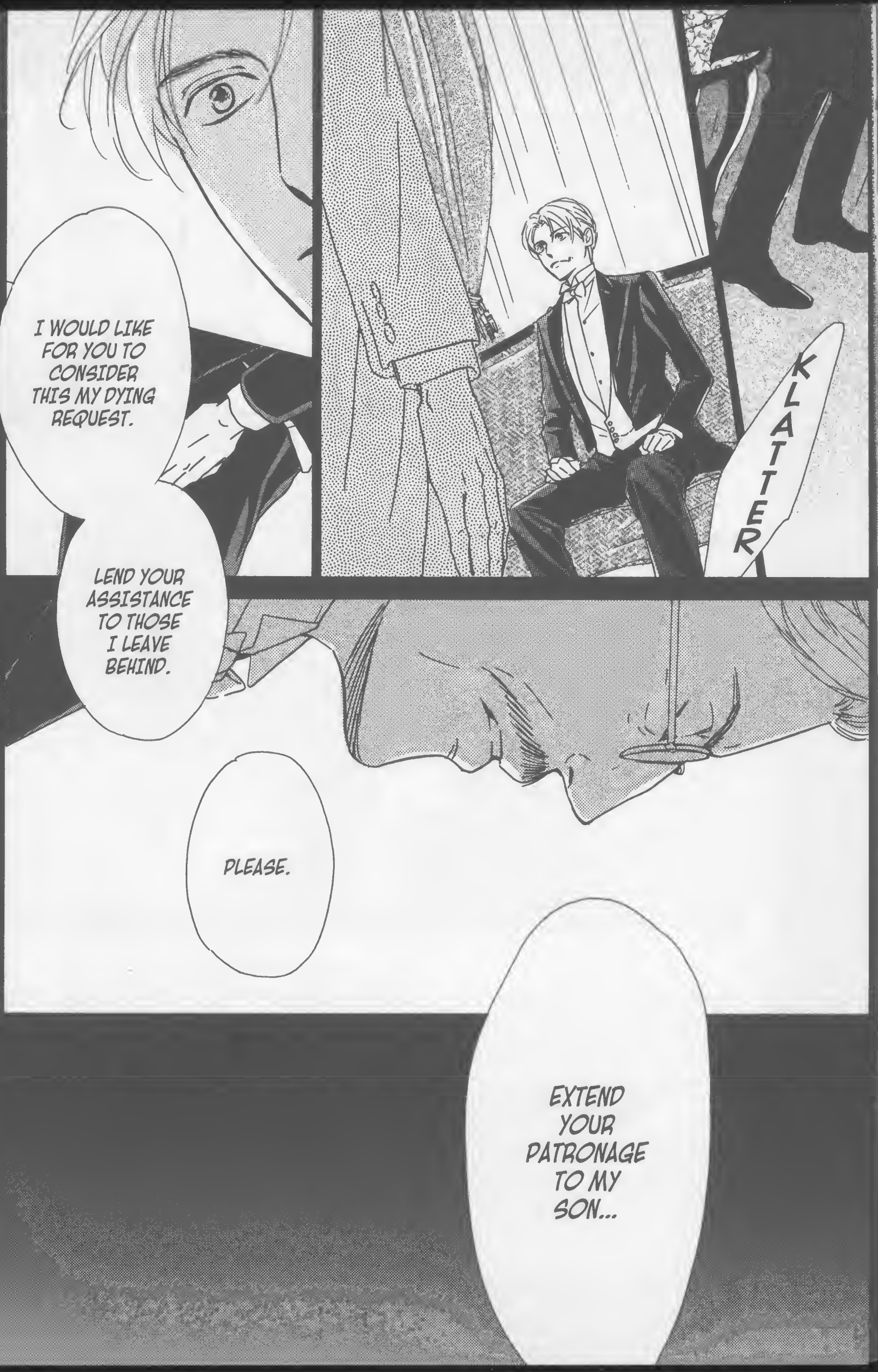

MASTER AKIHITO.
THE REASON YOU ARE CONSIDERING YOUR RETIREMENT IS SO THAT YOU MAY CEDE TO YOUR BUTLER, TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI.
IS THAT THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER?
THAT'S EXACTLY IT.
AND THERE IS NO ONE MORE SUITABLE TO BECOME HEAD OF THE HOUSE THAN HE?
MY FATHER ORIGINALLY WELCOMED KATSURAGI TO THE KUZE HOUSE SO HE WOULD INHERIT HIS POSITION.
UNLIKE KATSURAGI, I HAVE RECEIVED NO TEACHINGS WHATSOEVER FROM MY FATHER.
MASTER NAOTSUGU, YOU SAID THAT YOU YOURSELF ARE NOT SUITABLE TO BE THE HEAD OF A HOUSE.
BUT KATSURAGI IS DIFFERENT. THE EXISTENCE OF THE KUZE HOUSE NOW IS SOLELY THE RESULT OF KATSURAGI'S LABORS. HE HAS THIS KIND OF CAPABILITY.
...
WOULD YOU SAY THAT EVEN IF YOU KNEW HE DID NOT HAVE THE KUZE BLOOD IN HIS VEINS?

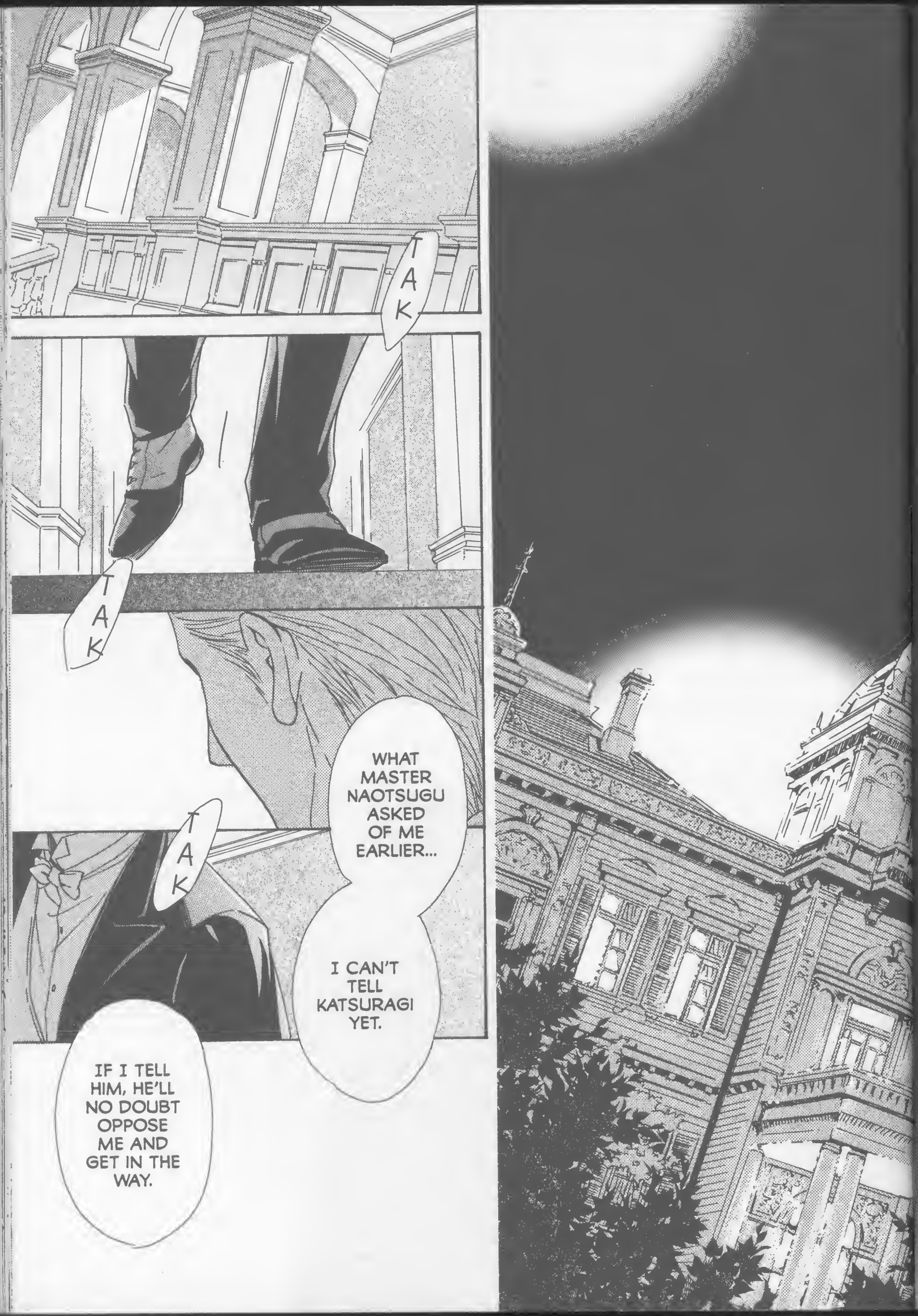

PLEASE SPEAK CAREFULLY.
IT IS A FACT BEYOND DOUBT THAT HIS MOTHER WAS MY GRANDFATHER'S CONCUBINE.
AS LONG AS HER NAME IS LISTED IN THE CONCUBINE REGISTRY, TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI IS THE ILLEGITIMATE CHILD OF MY PREDECESSOR'S PREDECESSOR.
AND... TO BE HONEST, IN MY HEART, I COULD CARE LESS ABOUT LINEAGE.
SOMEONE WITH THE CHARACTER TO PROTECT THIS HOUSE, PROTECT EVERYONE IN IT, SHOULD INHERIT THE TITLE.
THE PARTICULARS WILL WORK THEMSELVES OUT.
...
YOU REALIZE THAT IS IN OPPOSITION TO YOUR PREDECESSOR'S DYING WISH.
MY FATHER'S THINKING WAS DATED.
...

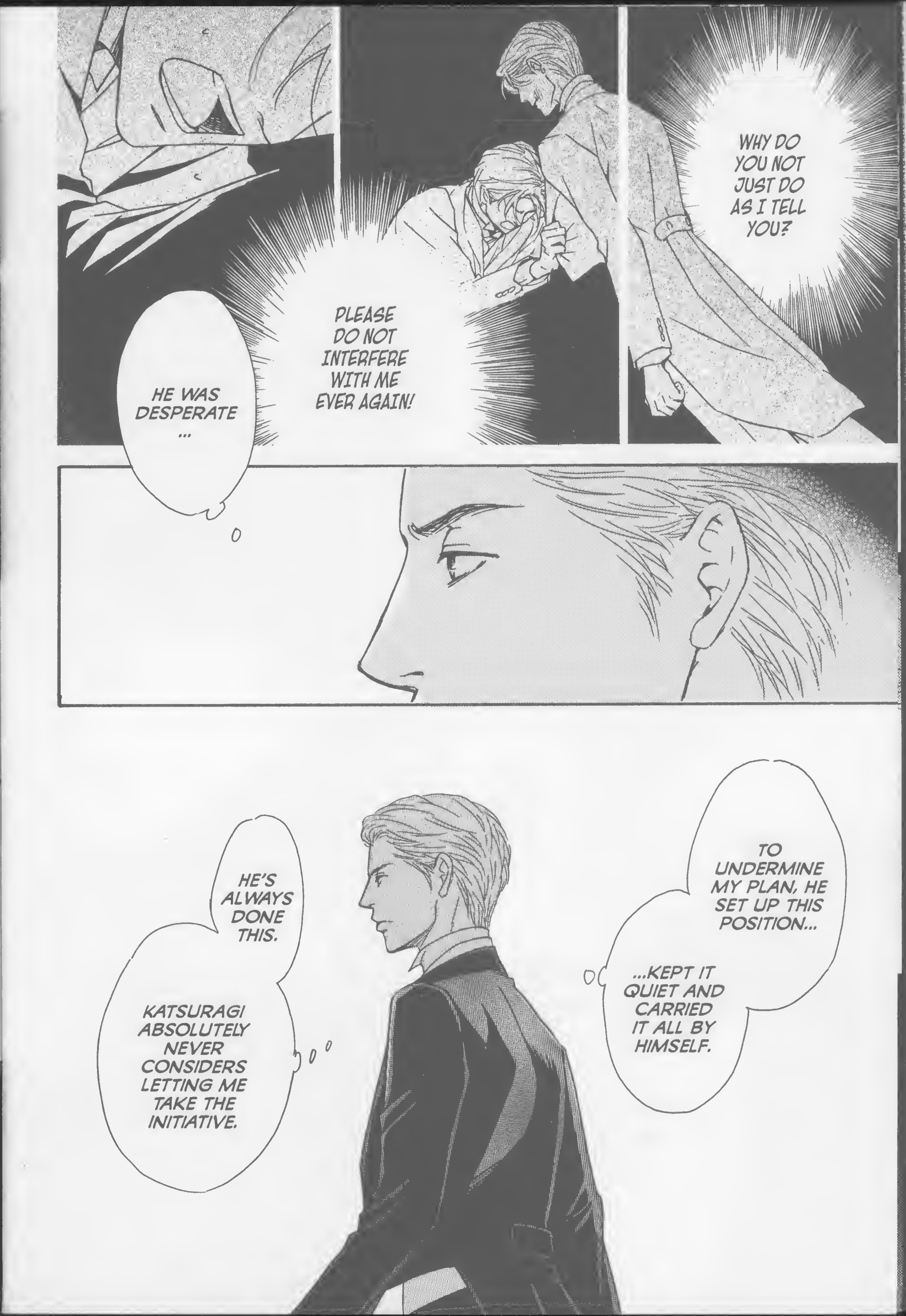

MASTER AKIHITO.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF TRICKS KATSURAGI PLAYED TO BRING ME HERE, BUT...
...AS I STATED PREVIOUSLY, I HAVE NO DESIRE TO BE OUT IN THE WORLD.
I AM MORE SUITED TO LIVING QUIETLY IN THE COUNTRY.
...
THERE I HAVE A KIND WOMAN WHO TAKES GOOD CARE OF ME.
THE DAUGHTER OF MY HEAD PHYSICIAN.
SHE IS A CHEERFUL WOMAN.

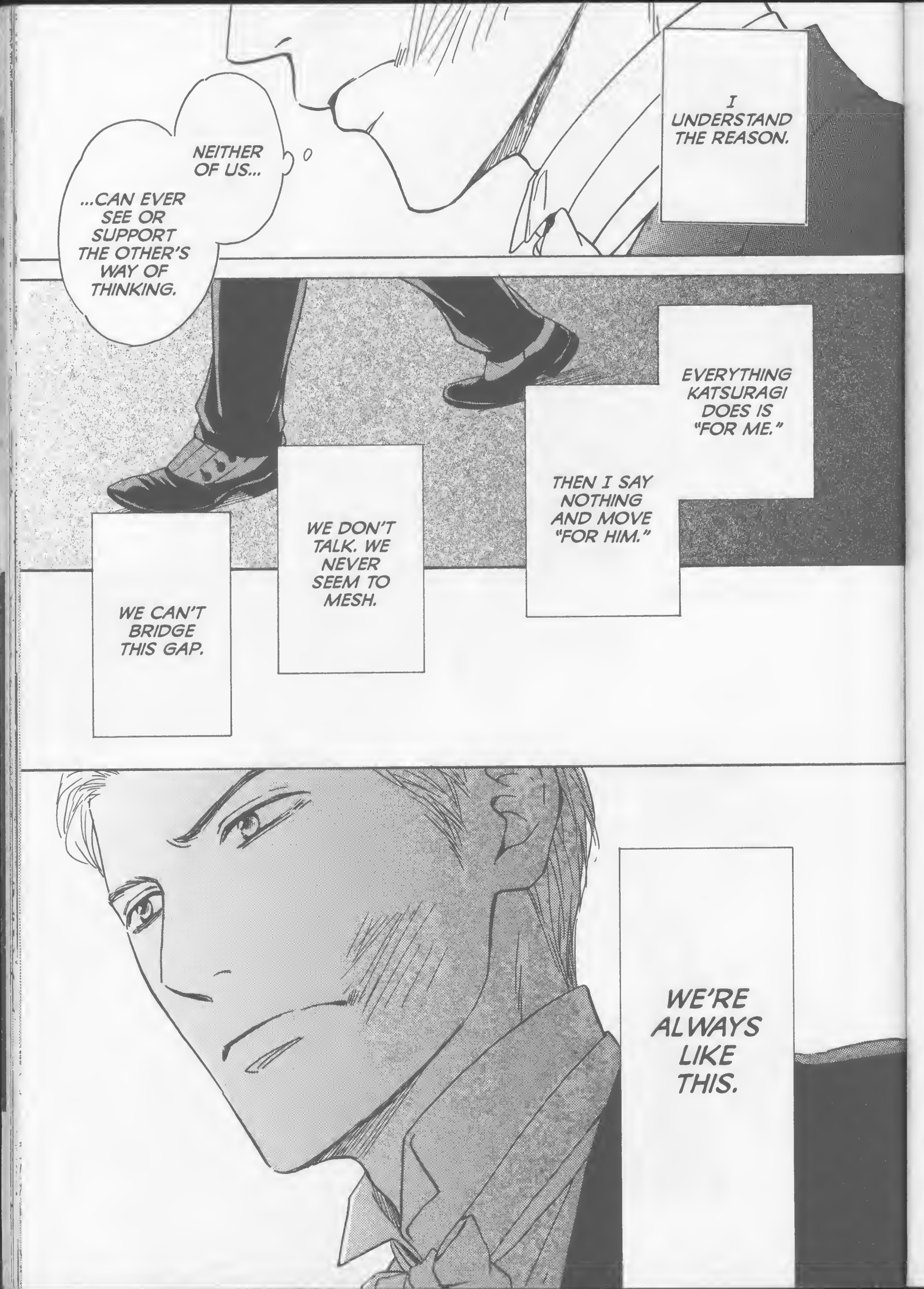

MASTER AKIHITO.
MY ILLNESS IS MORE SERIOUS THAN IT MAY APPEAR.
I BELIEVE THAT THIS WILL ALSO BE THE LAST TIME YOU AND I MEET.
VISCOUNT KUZE.

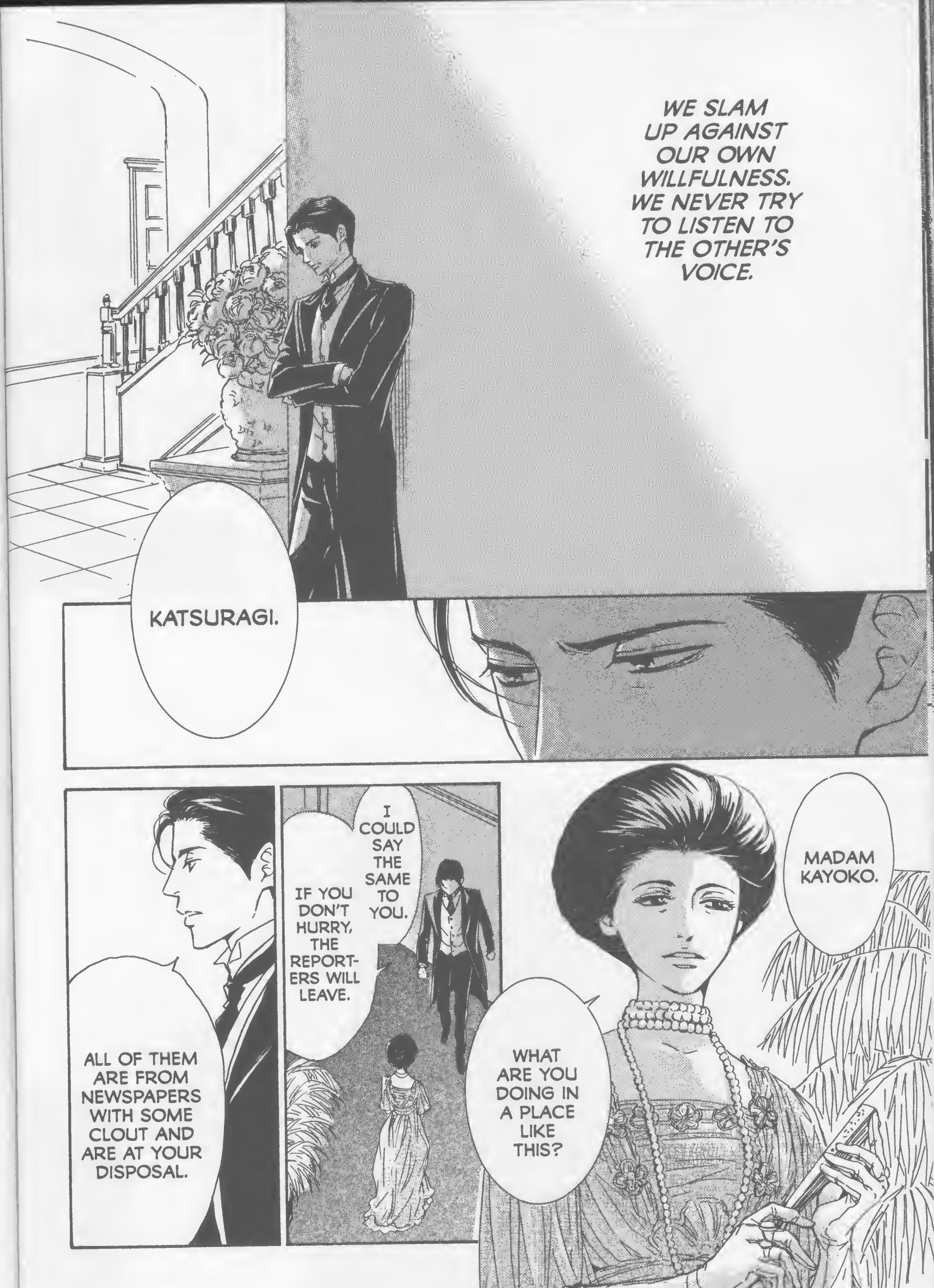

I WONDER, MASTER AKIHITO...
...IF YOU ALSO HAVE SOMEONE YOU CHERISH IN THIS WAY?
...
I DO.
...
I...
I WANT TO LIVE FOR THAT PERSON.
...
EXCELLENT.
IN THAT CASE, I BELIEVE YOU WILL BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND MY REQUEST.
...

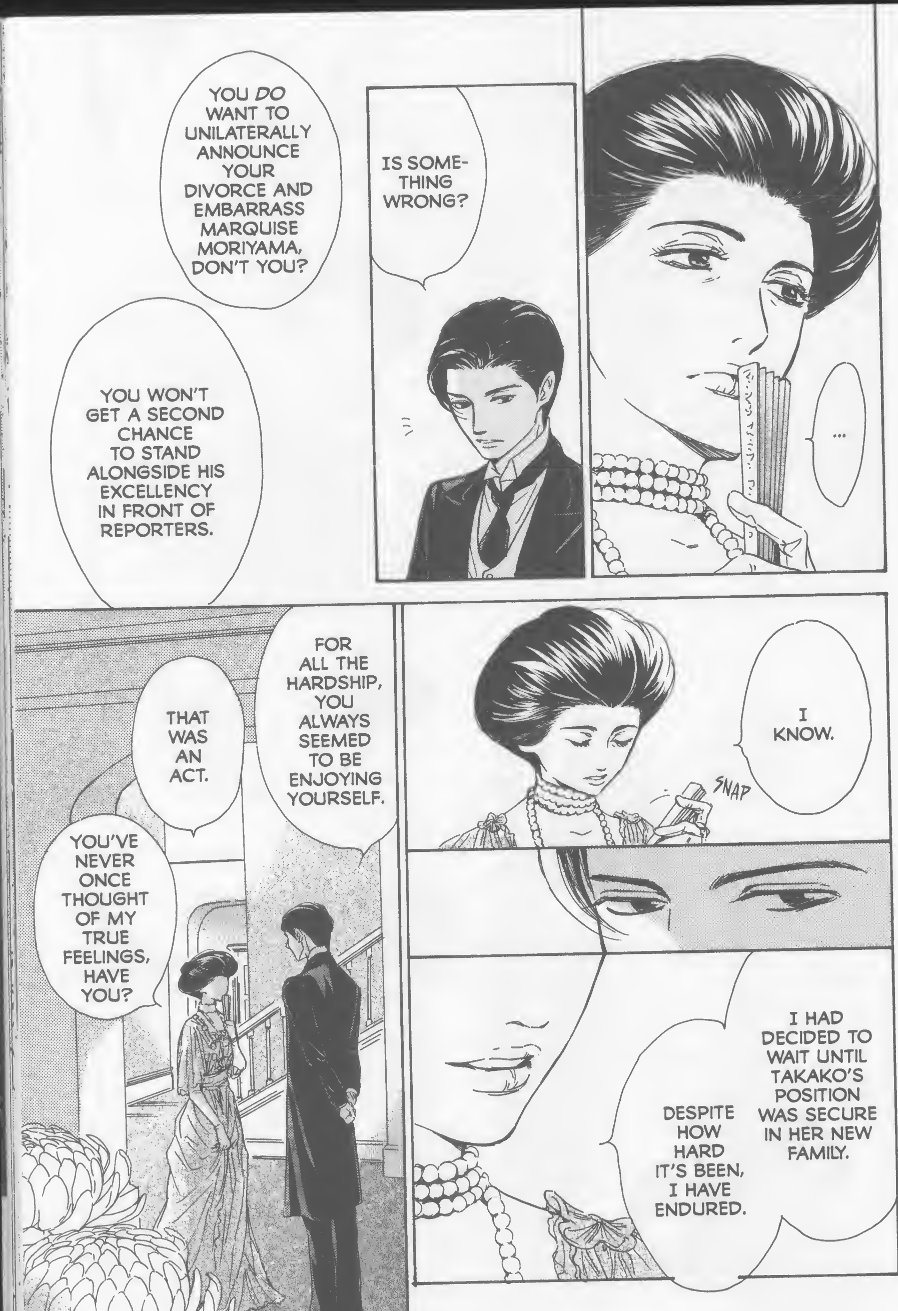

KLATTER
I WOULD LIKE FOR YOU TO CONSIDER THIS MY DYING REQUEST.
LEND YOUR ASSISTANCE TO THOSE I LEAVE BEHIND.
PLEASE.
EXTEND YOUR PATRONAGE TO MY SON...

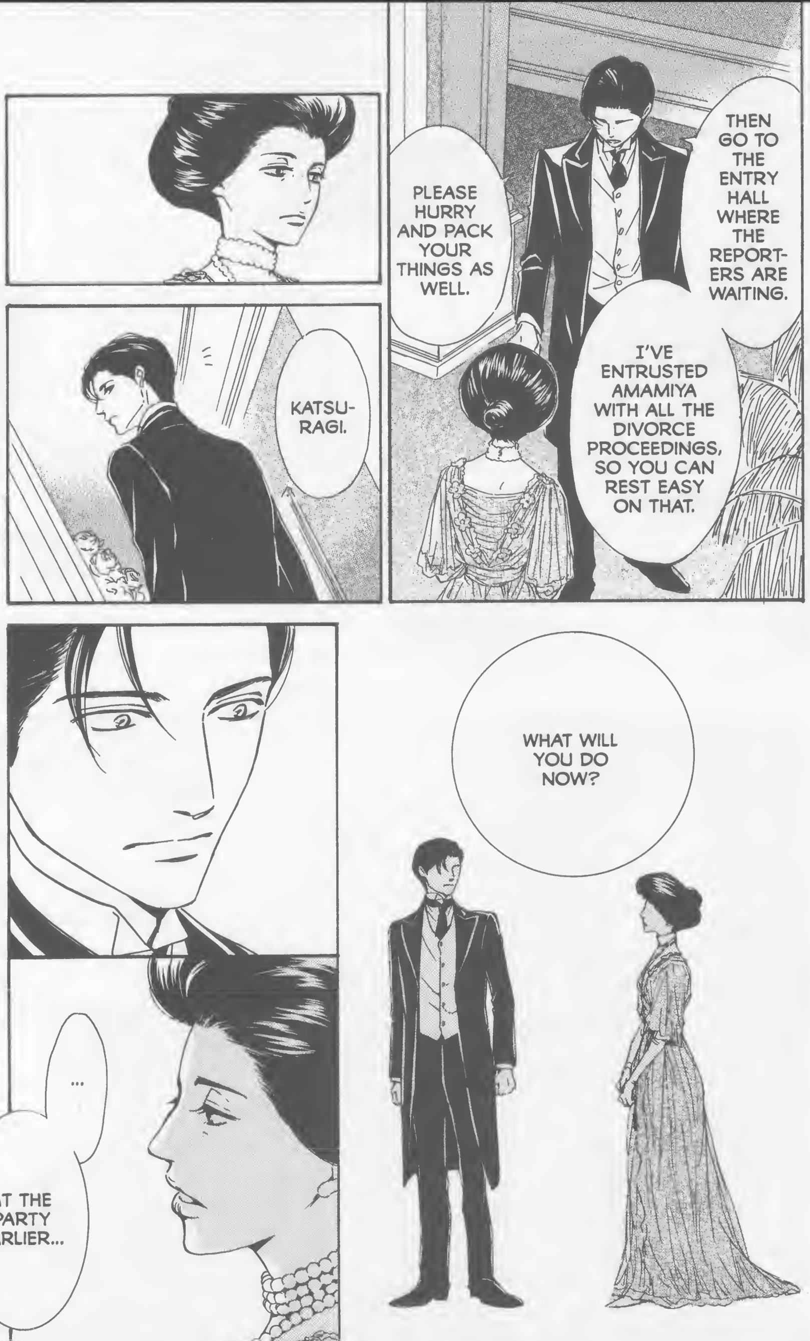

TAK
TAK
WHAT MASTER NAOTSUGU ASKED OF ME EARLIER...
TAK
I CAN'T TELL KATSURAGI YET.
IF I TELL HIM, HE'LL NO DOUBT OPPOSE ME AND GET IN THE WAY.

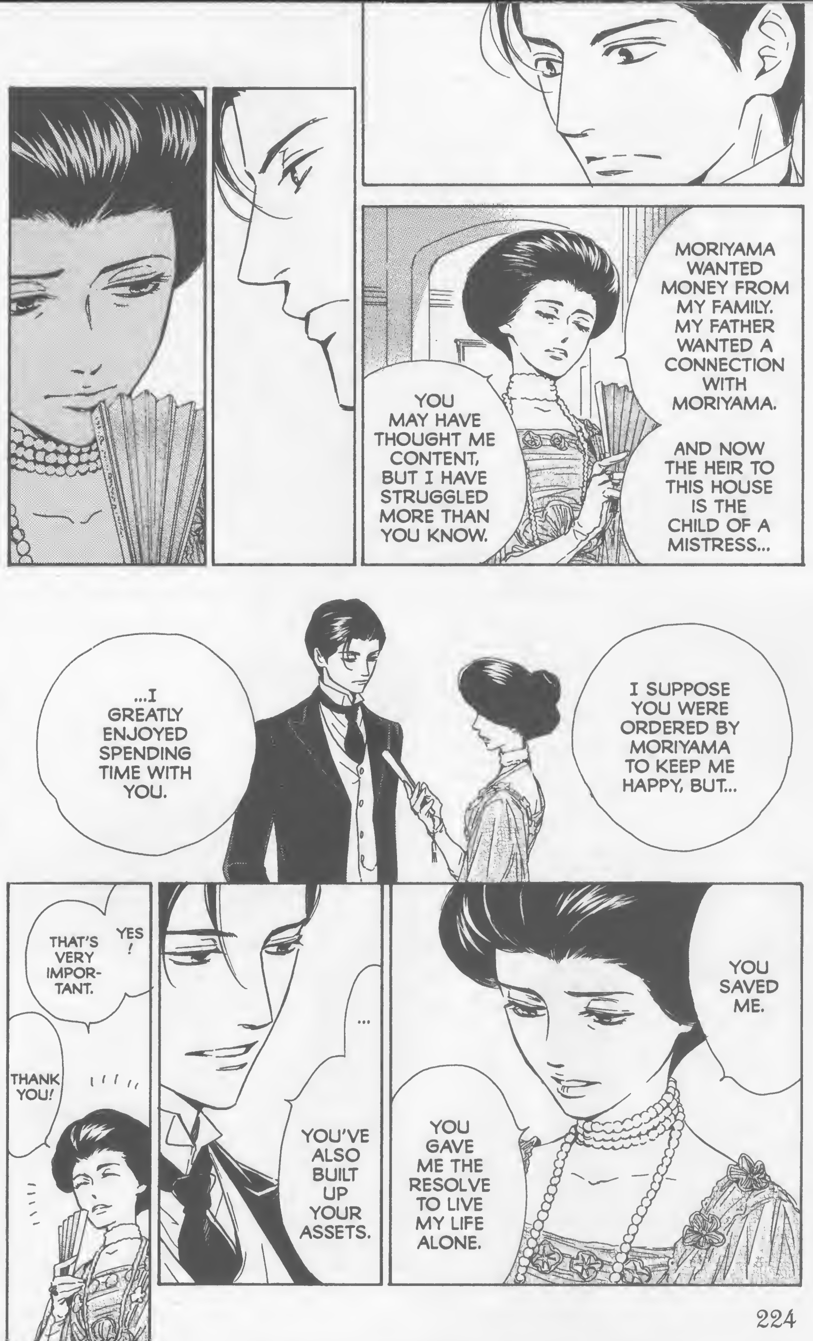

WHY DO YOU NOT JUST DO AS I TELL YOU?
PLEASE DO NOT INTERFERE WITH ME EVER AGAIN!
HE WAS DESPERATE...
TO UNDERMINE MY PLAN, HE SET UP THIS POSITION...
...KEPT IT QUIET AND CARRIED IT ALL BY HIMSELF.
HE'S ALWAYS DONE THIS.
KATSURAGI ABSOLUTELY NEVER CONSIDERS LETTING ME TAKE THE INITIATIVE.

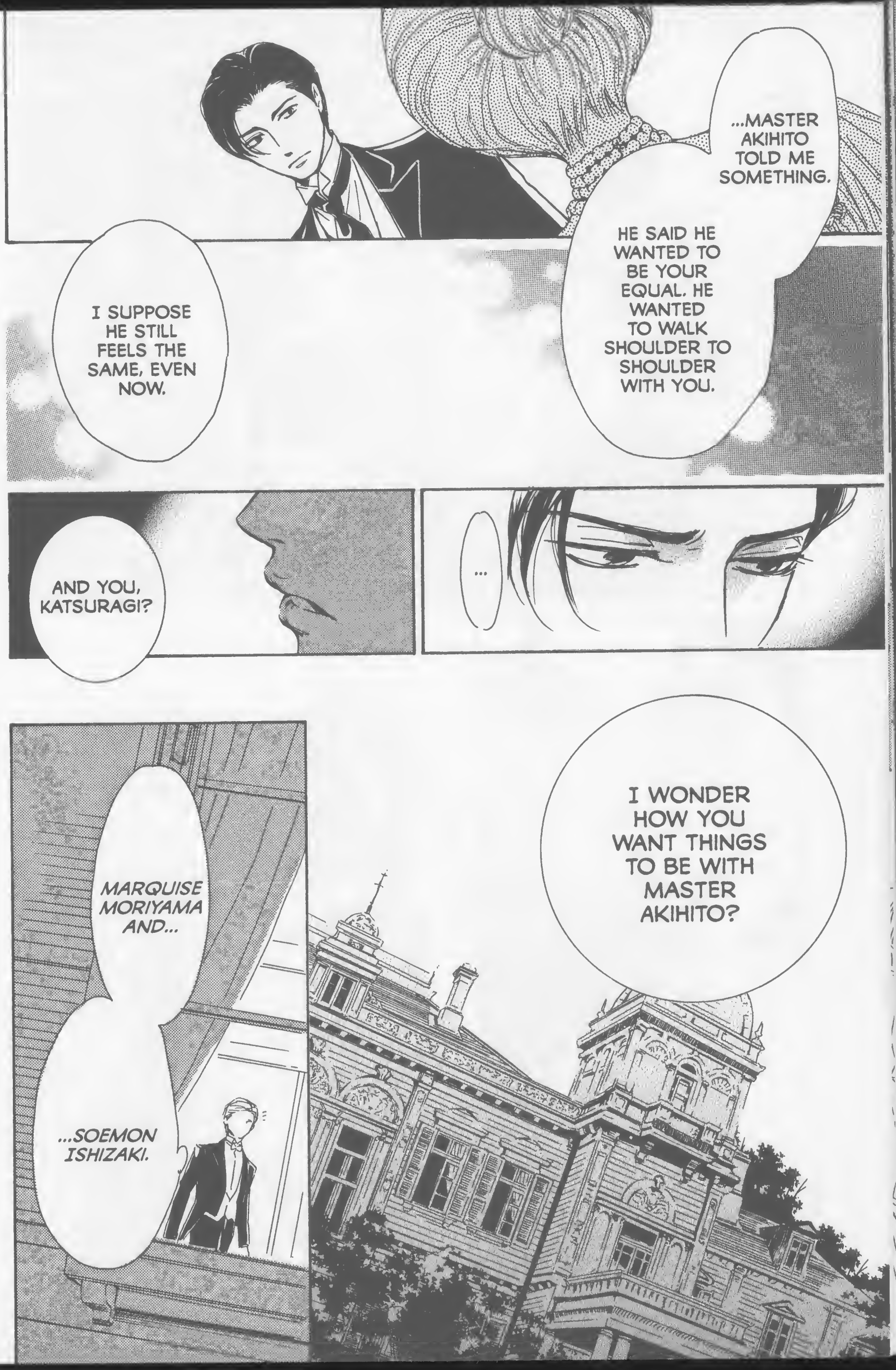

I UNDERSTAND THE REASON.
NEITHER OF US...
...CAN EVER SEE OR SUPPORT THE OTHER'S WAY OF THINKING.
EVERYTHING KATSURAGI DOES IS "FOR ME."
THEN I SAY NOTHING AND MOVE "FOR HIM."
WE DON'T TALK. WE NEVER SEEM TO MESH.
WE CAN'T BRIDGE THIS GAP.
WE'RE ALWAYS LIKE THIS.

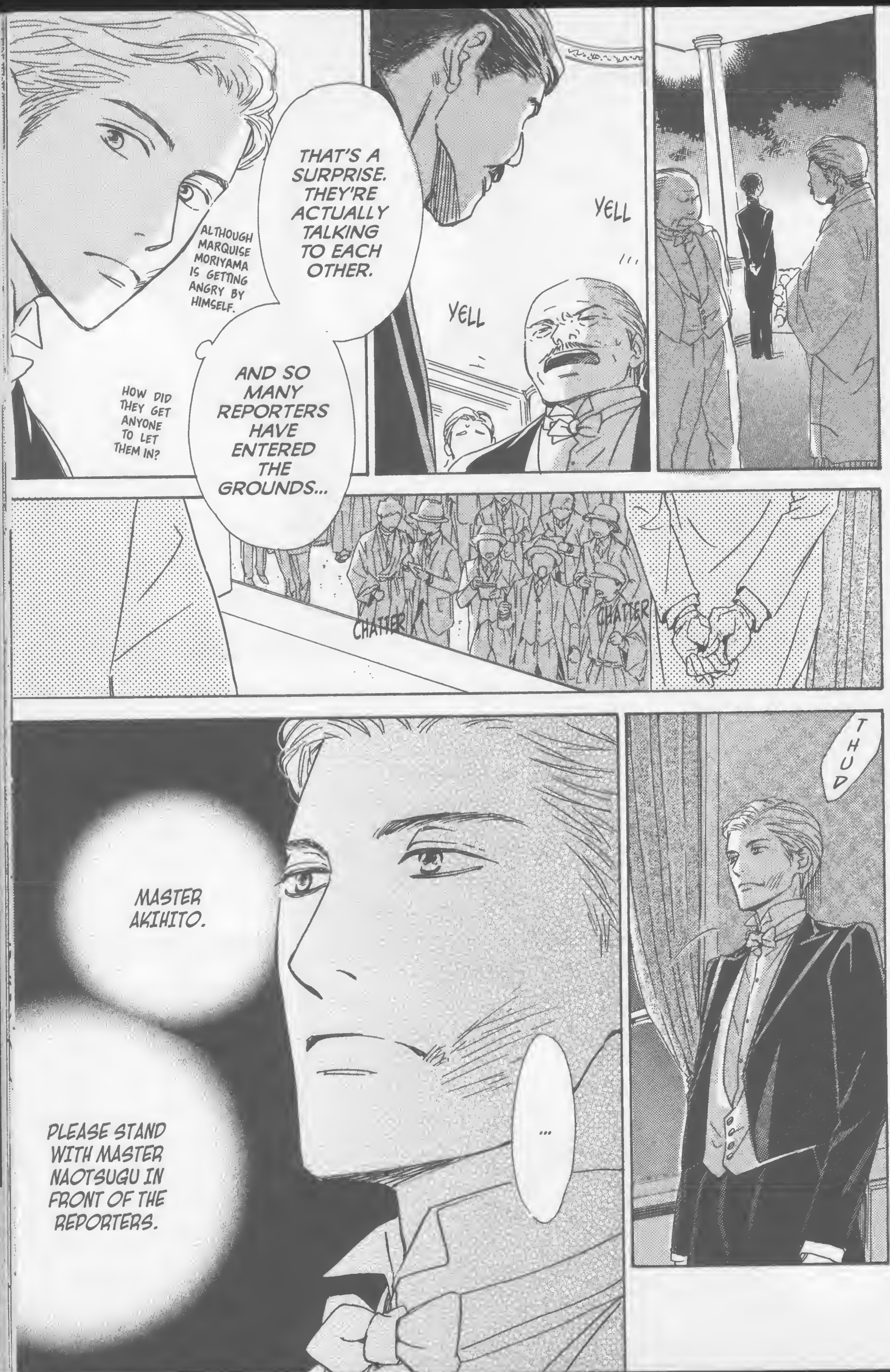

WE SLAM UP AGAINST OUR OWN WILLFULNESS. WE NEVER TRY TO LISTEN TO THE OTHER'S VOICE.
KATSURAGI.
MADAM KAYOKO.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?
I COULD SAY THE SAME TO YOU.
IF YOU DON'T HURRY, THE REPORTERS WILL LEAVE.
ALL OF THEM ARE FROM NEWSPAPERS WITH SOME CLOUT AND ARE AT YOUR DISPOSAL.

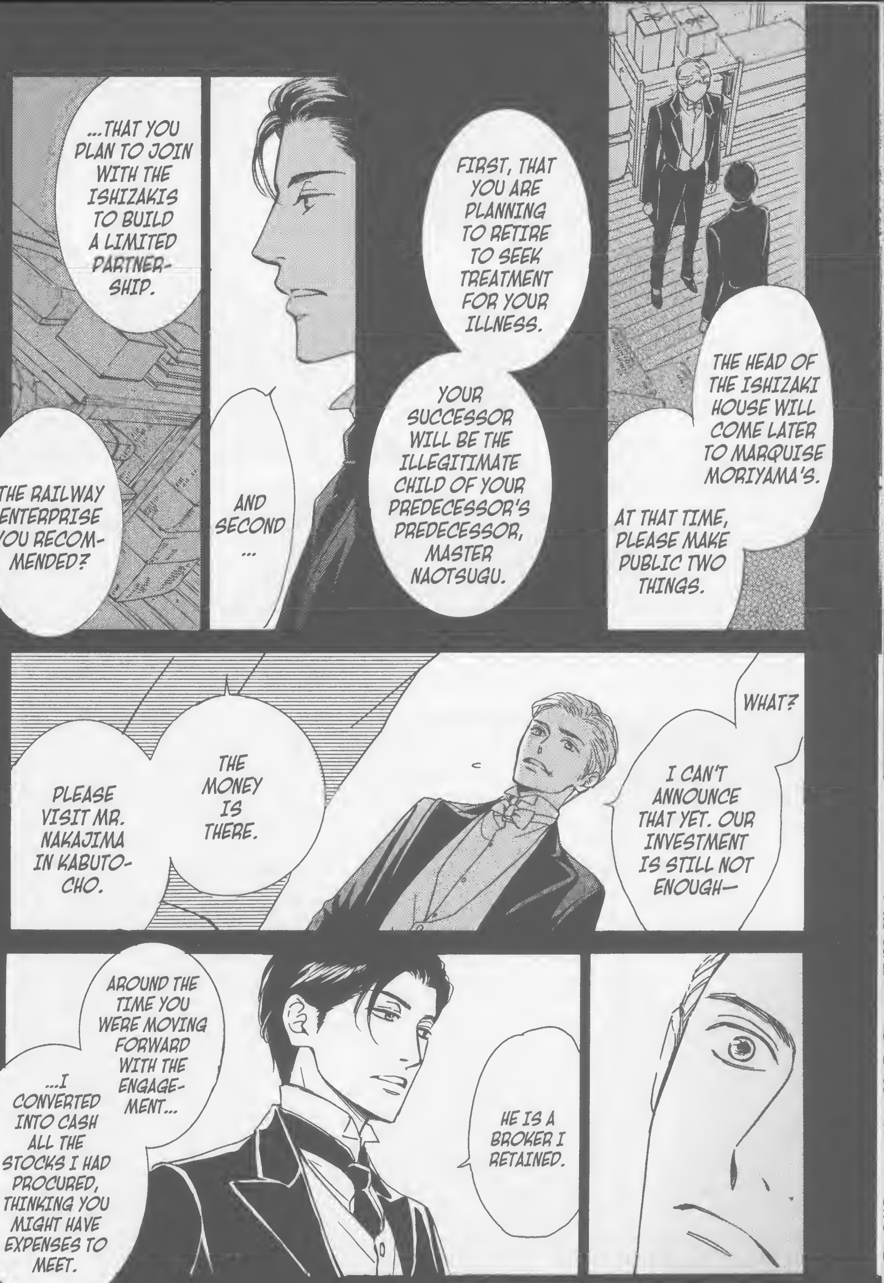

...
IS SOMETHING WRONG?
YOU *DO* WANT TO UNILATERALLY ANNOUNCE YOUR DIVORCE AND EMBARRASS MARQUISE MORIYAMA, DON'T YOU?
YOU WON'T GET A SECOND CHANCE TO STAND ALONGSIDE HIS EXCELLENCY IN FRONT OF REPORTERS.
I KNOW.
SNAP
I HAD DECIDED TO WAIT UNTIL TAKAKO'S POSITION WAS SECURE IN HER NEW FAMILY.
DESPITE HOW HARD IT'S BEEN, I HAVE ENDURED.
FOR ALL THE HARDSHIP, YOU ALWAYS SEEMED TO BE ENJOYING YOURSELF.
THAT WAS AN ACT.
YOU'VE NEVER ONCE THOUGHT OF MY TRUE FEELINGS, HAVE YOU?

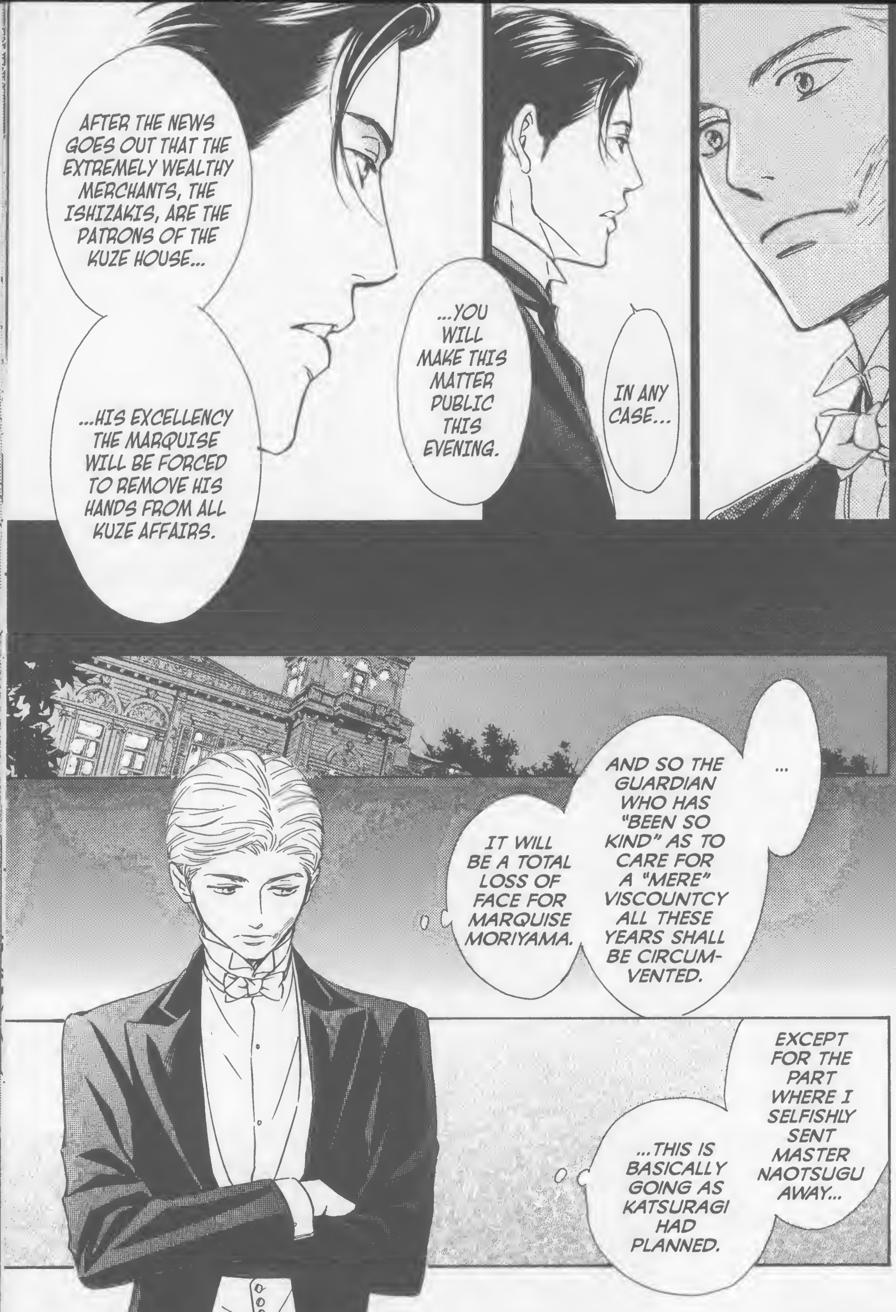

THEN GO TO THE ENTRY HALL WHERE THE REPORTERS ARE WAITING.
PLEASE HURRY AND PACK YOUR THINGS AS WELL.
I'VE ENTRUSTED AMAMIYA WITH ALL THE DIVORCE PROCEEDINGS, SO YOU CAN REST EASY ON THAT.
KATSURAGI.
WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW?
...
AT THE PARTY EARLIER...

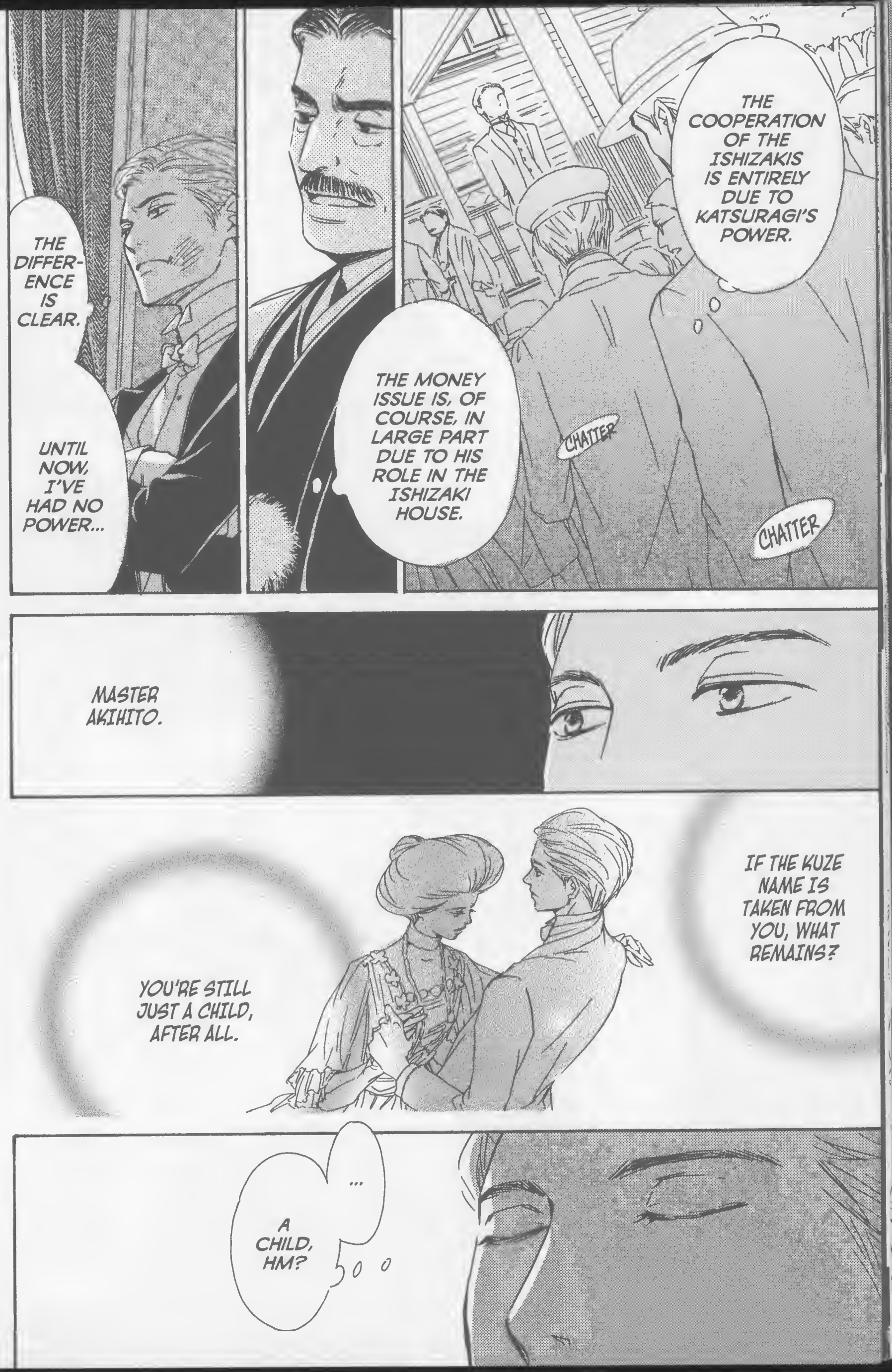

MORIYAMA WANTED MONEY FROM MY FAMILY. MY FATHER WANTED A CONNECTION WITH MORIYAMA.
AND NOW THE HEIR TO THIS HOUSE IS THE CHILD OF A MISTRESS...
YOU MAY HAVE THOUGHT ME CONTENT, BUT I HAVE STRUGGLED MORE THAN YOU KNOW.
I SUPPOSE YOU WERE ORDERED BY MORIYAMA TO KEEP ME HAPPY, BUT...
...I GREATLY ENJOYED SPENDING TIME WITH YOU.
YOU SAVED ME.
YOU GAVE ME THE RESOLVE TO LIVE MY LIFE ALONE.
YOU'VE ALSO BUILT UP YOUR ASSETS.
...
YES!
THAT'S VERY IMPORTANT.
THANK YOU!

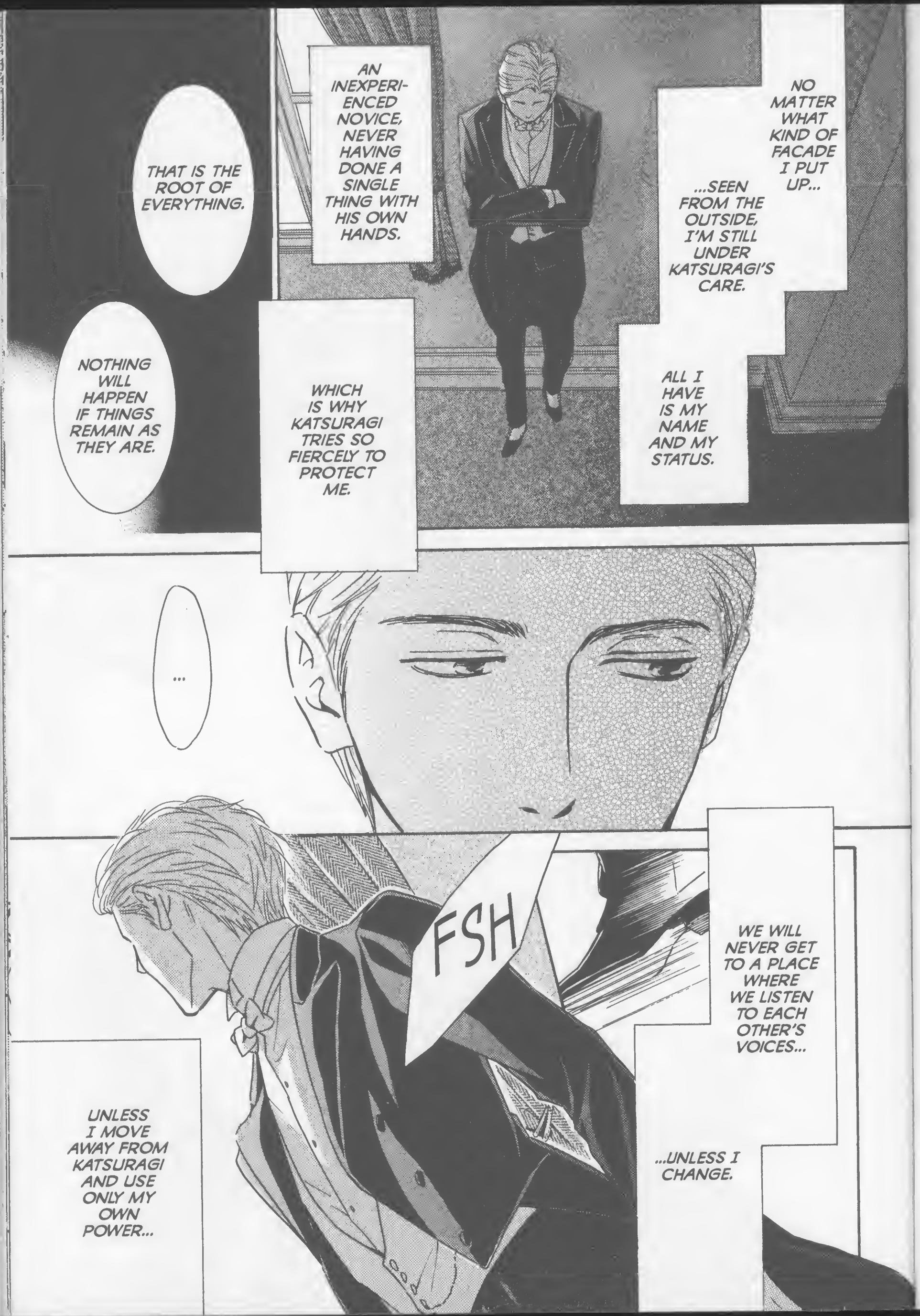

...MASTER AKIHITO TOLD ME SOMETHING.
HE SAID HE WANTED TO BE YOUR EQUAL. HE WANTED TO WALK SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH YOU.
I SUPPOSE HE STILL FEELS THE SAME, EVEN NOW.
...
AND YOU, KATSURAGI?
I WONDER HOW YOU WANT THINGS TO BE WITH MASTER AKIHITO?
MARQUISE MORIYAMA AND...
...SOEMON ISHIZAKI.

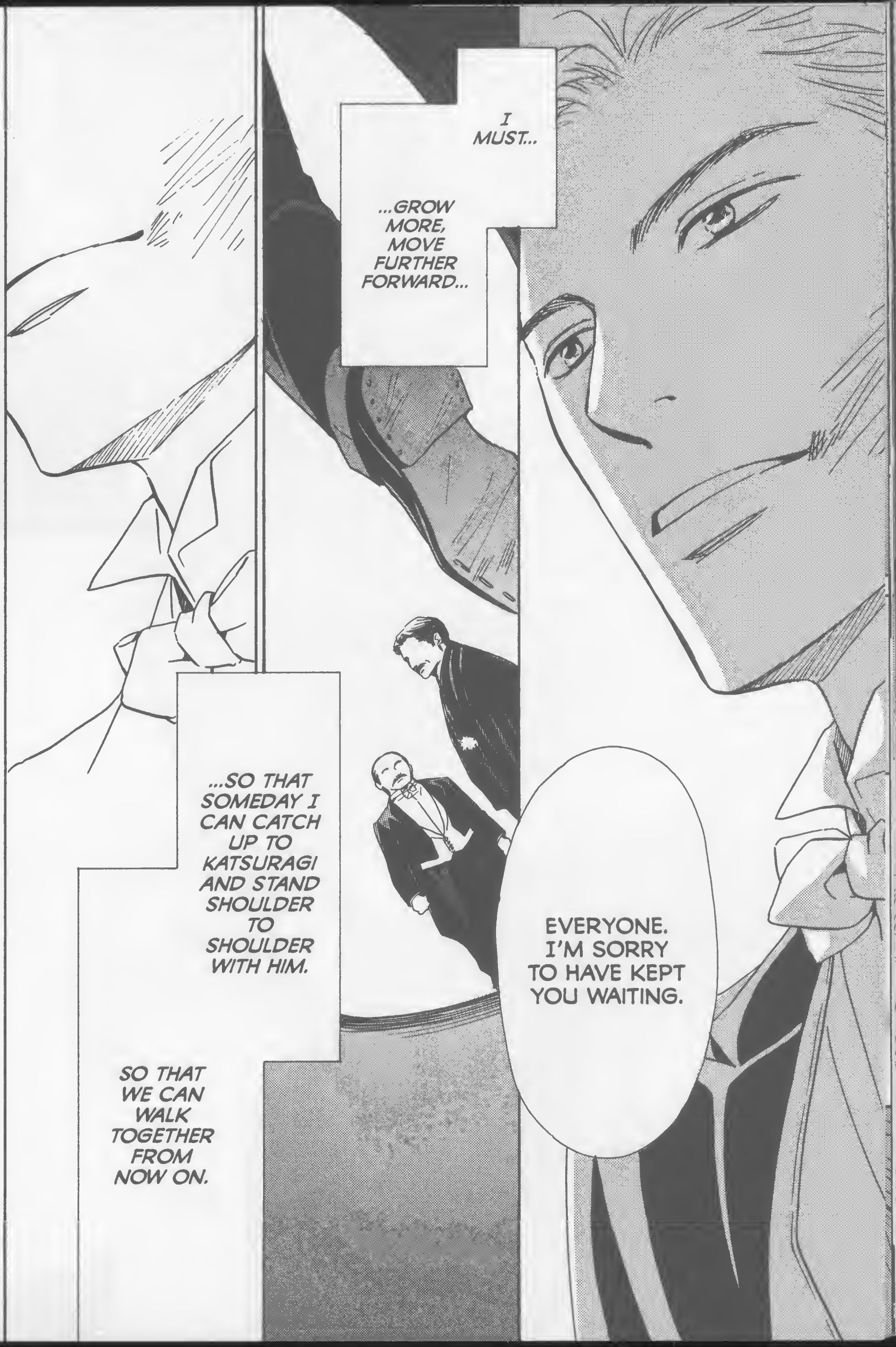

YELL
YELL
THAT'S A SURPRISE. THEY'RE ACTUALLY TALKING TO EACH OTHER.
ALTHOUGH MARQUISE MORIYAMA IS GETTING ANGRY BY HIMSELF.
AND SO MANY REPORTERS HAVE ENTERED THE GROUNDS...
HOW DID THEY GET ANYONE TO LET THEM IN?
CHATTER
CHATTER
THUD
...
MASTER AKIHITO.
PLEASE STAND WITH MASTER NAOTSUGU IN FRONT OF THE REPORTERS.

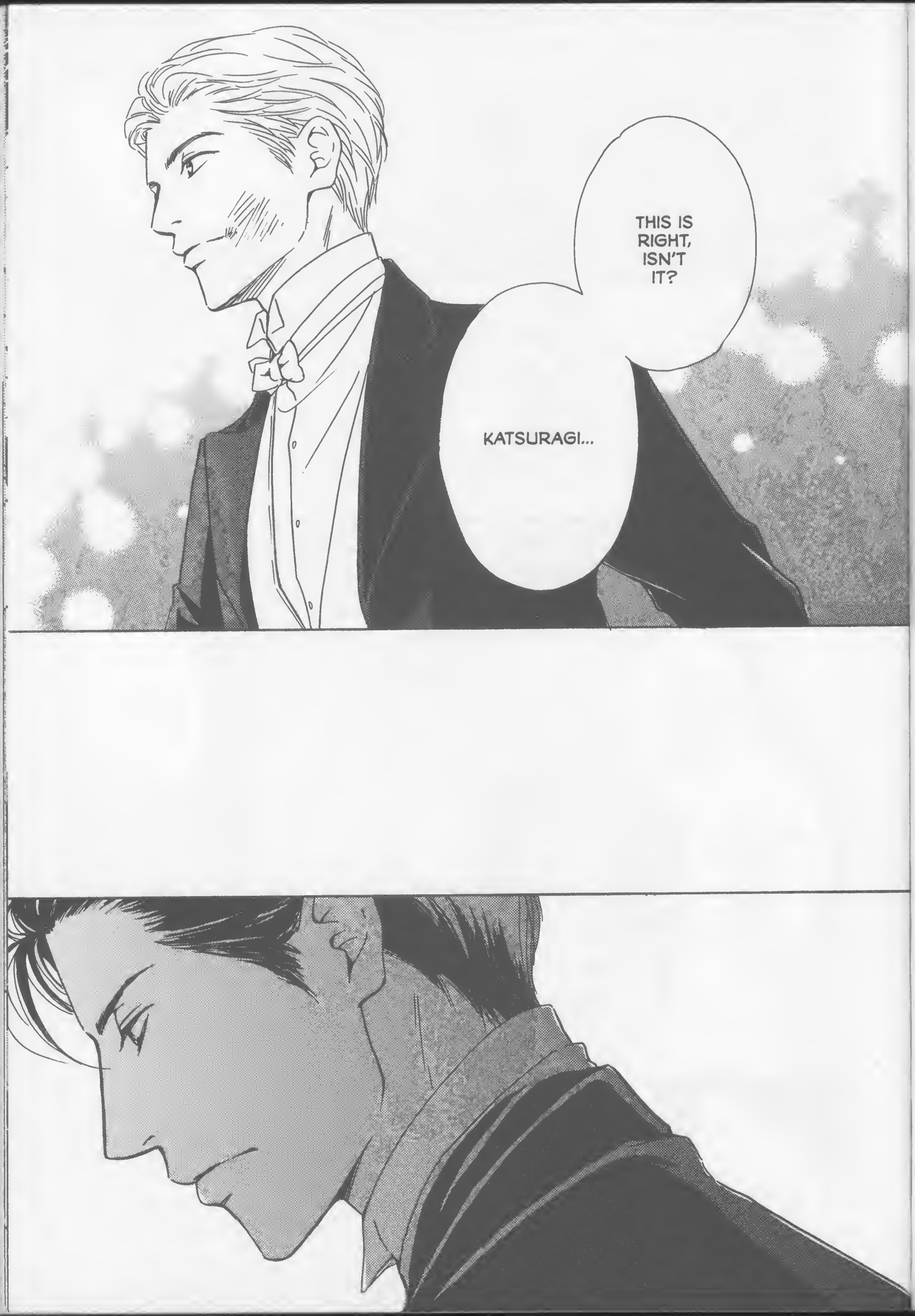

THE HEAD OF THE ISHIZAKI HOUSE WILL COME LATER TO MARQUISE MORIYAMA'S.
AT THAT TIME, PLEASE MAKE PUBLIC TWO THINGS.
FIRST, THAT YOU ARE PLANNING TO RETIRE TO SEEK TREATMENT FOR YOUR ILLNESS.
YOUR SUCCESSOR WILL BE THE ILLEGITIMATE CHILD OF YOUR PREDECESSOR'S PREDECESSOR, MASTER NAOTSUGU.
AND SECOND ...
...THAT YOU PLAN TO JOIN WITH THE ISHIZAKIS TO BUILD A LIMITED PARTNERSHIP.
THE RAILWAY ENTERPRISE YOU RECOMMENDED?
WHAT?
I CAN'T ANNOUNCE THAT YET. OUR INVESTMENT IS STILL NOT ENOUGH—
THE MONEY IS THERE.
PLEASE VISIT MR. NAKAJIMA IN KABUTO-CHO.
HE IS A BROKER I RETAINED.
AROUND THE TIME YOU WERE MOVING FORWARD WITH THE ENGAGEMENT...
...I CONVERTED INTO CASH ALL THE STOCKS I HAD PROCURED, THINKING YOU MIGHT HAVE EXPENSES TO MEET.

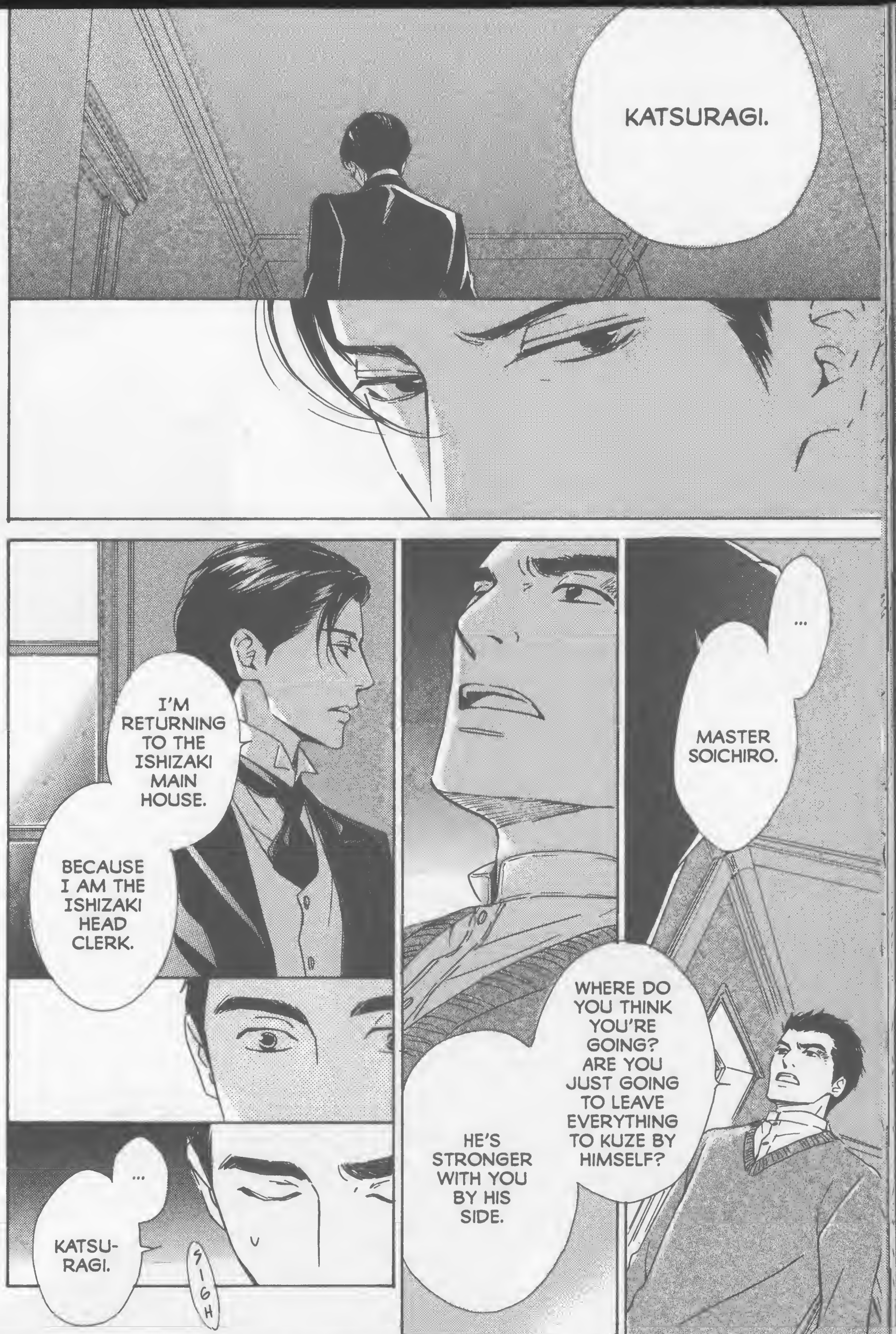

IN ANY CASE...
...YOU WILL MAKE THIS MATTER PUBLIC THIS EVENING.
AFTER THE NEWS GOES OUT THAT THE EXTREMELY WEALTHY MERCHANTS, THE ISHIZAKIS, ARE THE PATRONS OF THE KUZE HOUSE...
...HIS EXCELLENCY THE MARQUISE WILL BE FORCED TO REMOVE HIS HANDS FROM ALL KUZE AFFAIRS.
...
AND SO THE GUARDIAN WHO HAS "BEEN SO KIND" AS TO CARE FOR A "MERE" VISCOUNTCY ALL THESE YEARS SHALL BE CIRCUMVENTED.
IT WILL BE A TOTAL LOSS OF FACE FOR MARQUISE MORIYAMA.
EXCEPT FOR THE PART WHERE I SELFISHLY SENT MASTER NAOTSUGU AWAY...
...THIS IS BASICALLY GOING AS KATSURAGI HAD PLANNED.

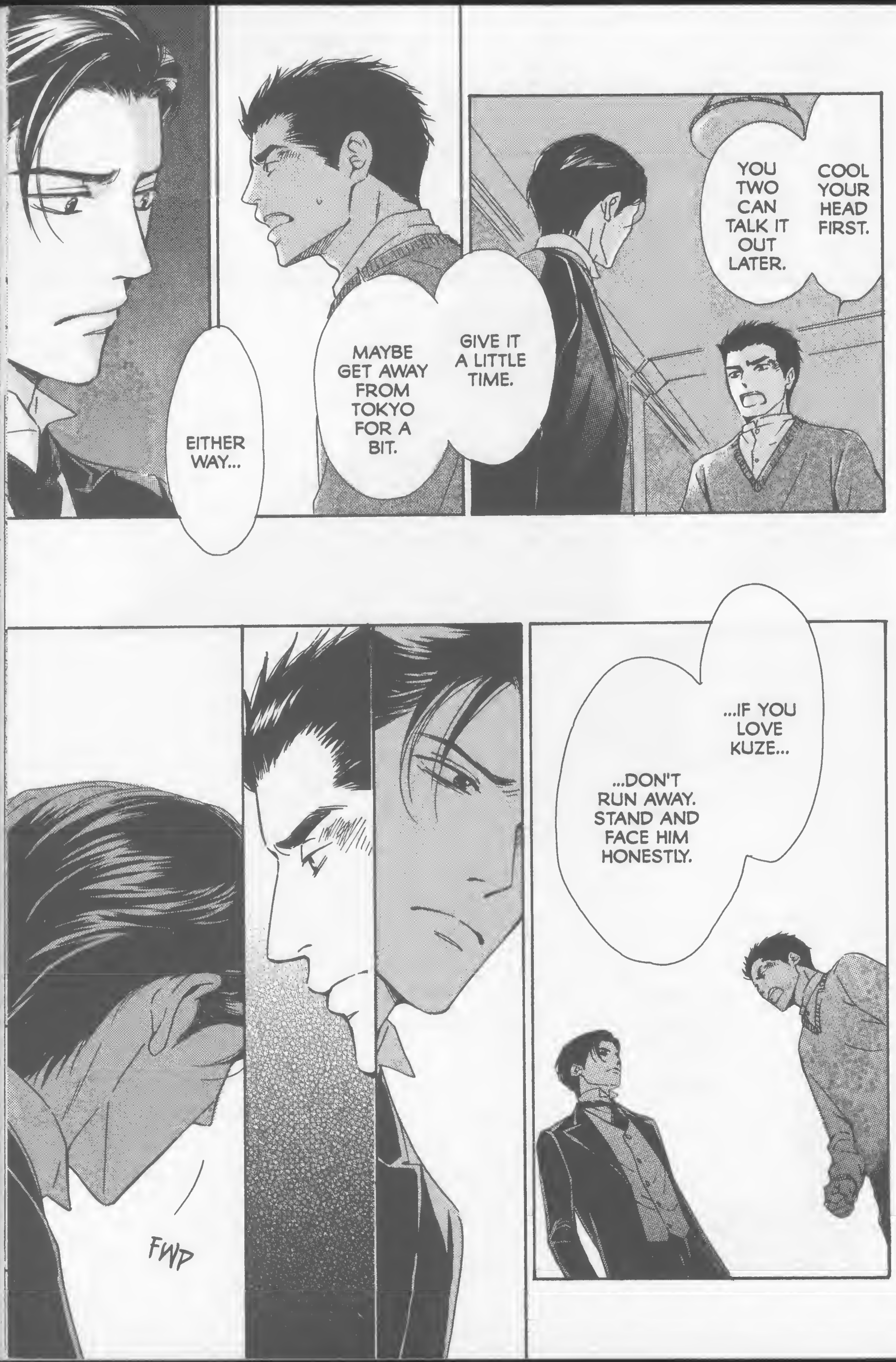

THE COOPERATION OF THE ISHIZAKIS IS ENTIRELY DUE TO KATSURAGI'S POWER.
THE MONEY ISSUE IS, OF COURSE, IN LARGE PART DUE TO HIS ROLE IN THE ISHIZAKI HOUSE.
CHATTER
CHATTER
THE DIFFERENCE IS CLEAR.
UNTIL NOW, I'VE HAD NO POWER...
MASTER AKIHITO.
IF THE KUZE NAME IS TAKEN FROM YOU, WHAT REMAINS?
YOU'RE STILL JUST A CHILD, AFTER ALL.
...
A CHILD, HM?

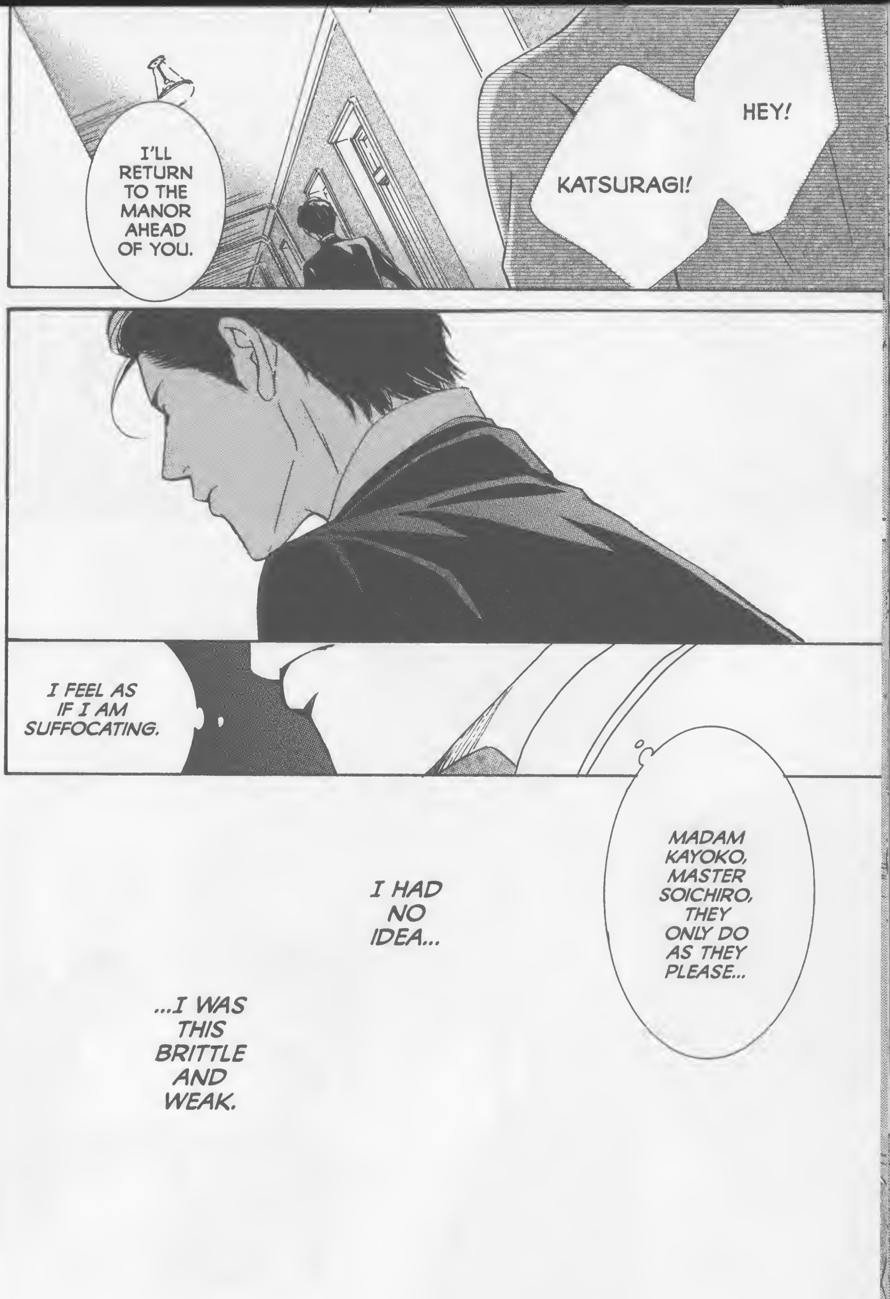

NO MATTER WHAT KIND OF FACADE I PUT UP...
...SEEN FROM THE OUTSIDE, I'M STILL UNDER KATSURAGI'S CARE.
ALL I HAVE IS MY NAME AND MY STATUS.
AN INEXPERIENCED NOVICE, NEVER HAVING DONE A SINGLE THING WITH HIS OWN HANDS.
WHICH IS WHY KATSURAGI TRIES SO FIERCELY TO PROTECT ME.
THAT IS THE ROOT OF EVERYTHING.
NOTHING WILL HAPPEN IF THINGS REMAIN AS THEY ARE.
...
WE WILL NEVER GET TO A PLACE WHERE WE LISTEN TO EACH OTHER'S VOICES...
...UNLESS I CHANGE.
FSH
UNLESS I MOVE AWAY FROM KATSURAGI AND USE ONLY MY OWN POWER...

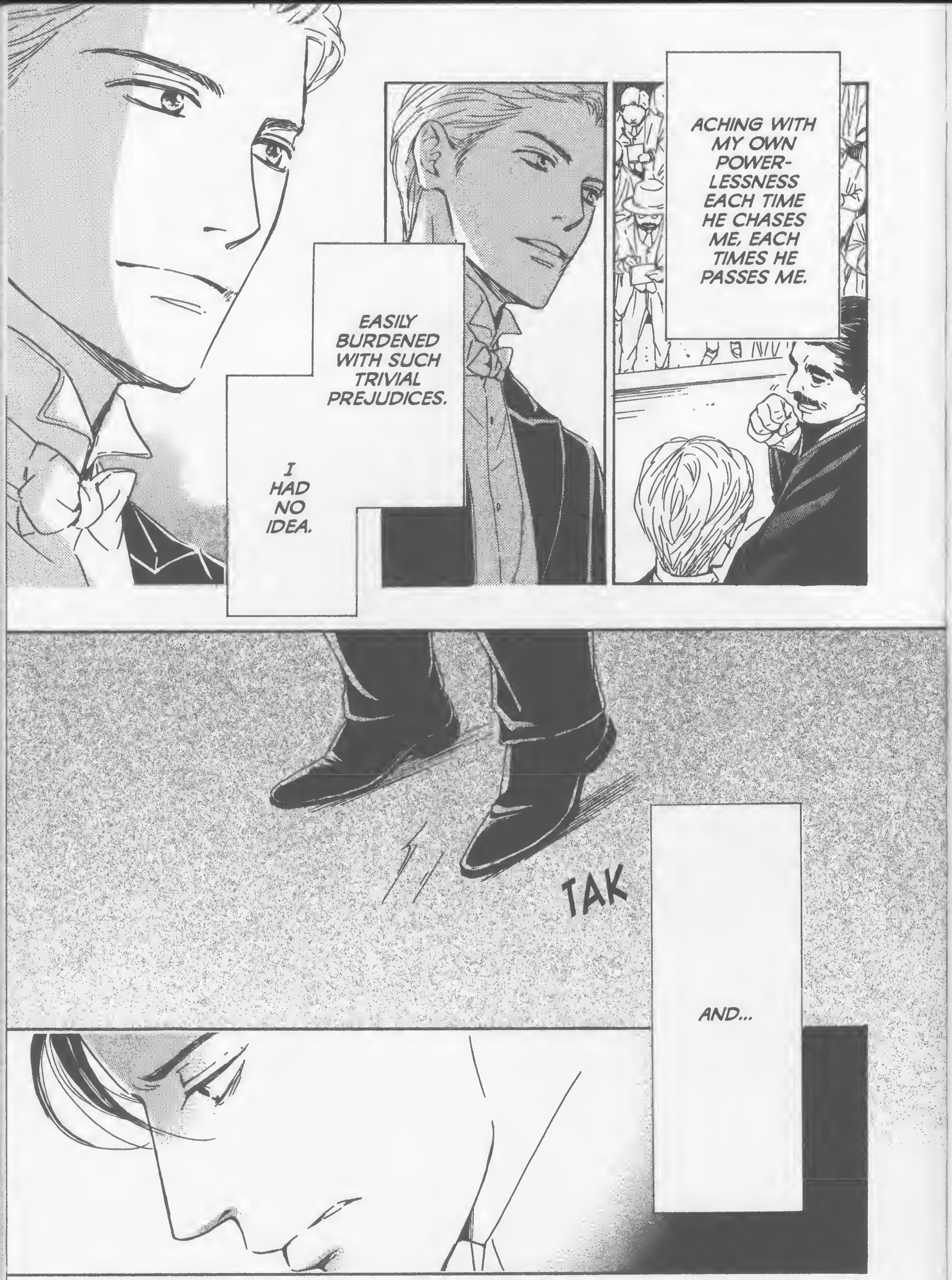

I MUST...
...GROW MORE, MOVE FURTHER FORWARD...
...SO THAT SOMEDAY I CAN CATCH UP TO KATSURAGI AND STAND SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH HIM.
SO THAT WE CAN WALK TOGETHER FROM NOW ON.
EVERYONE. I'M SORRY TO HAVE KEPT YOU WAITING.

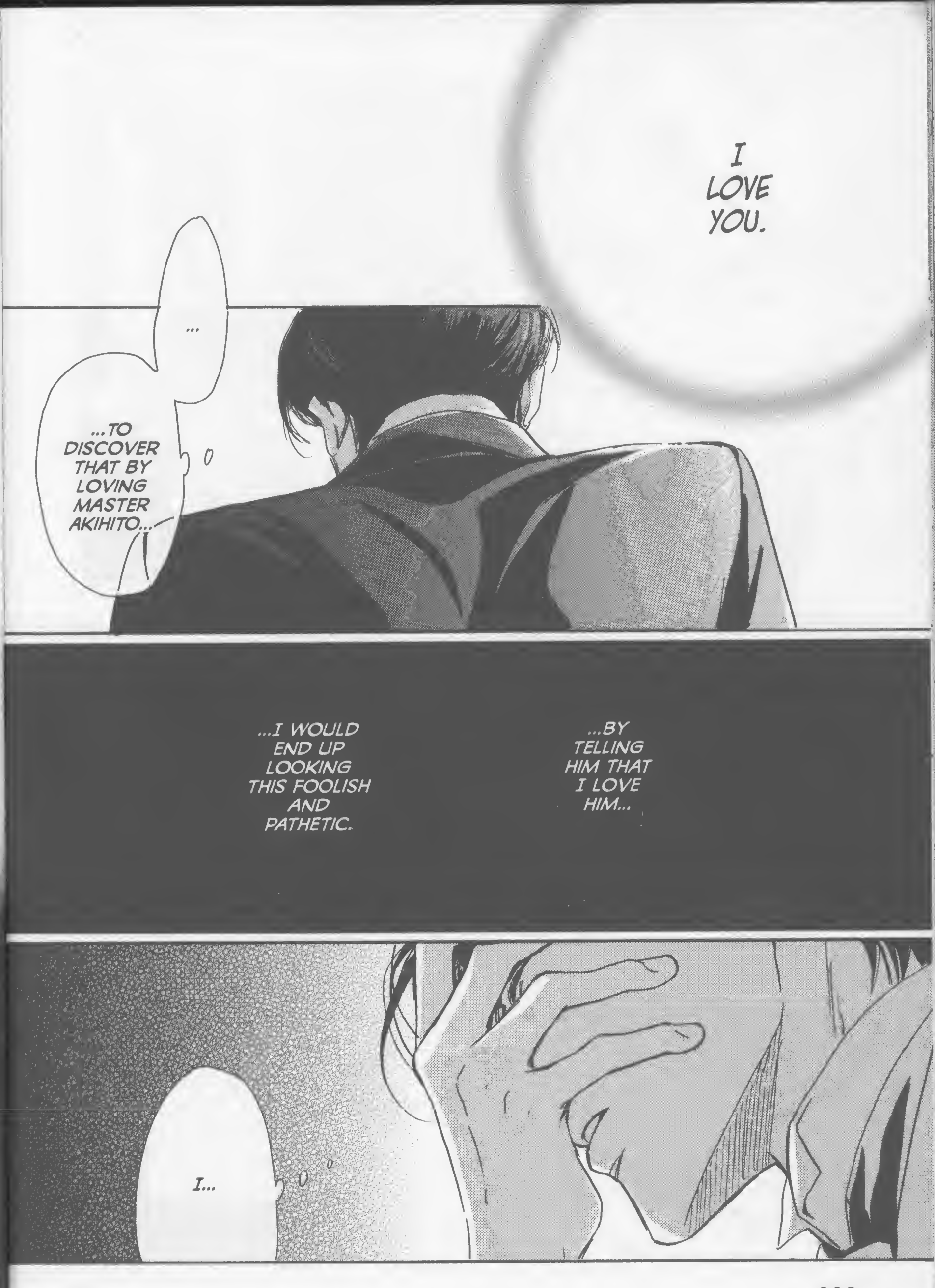

THIS IS RIGHT, ISN'T IT?
KATSURAGI...

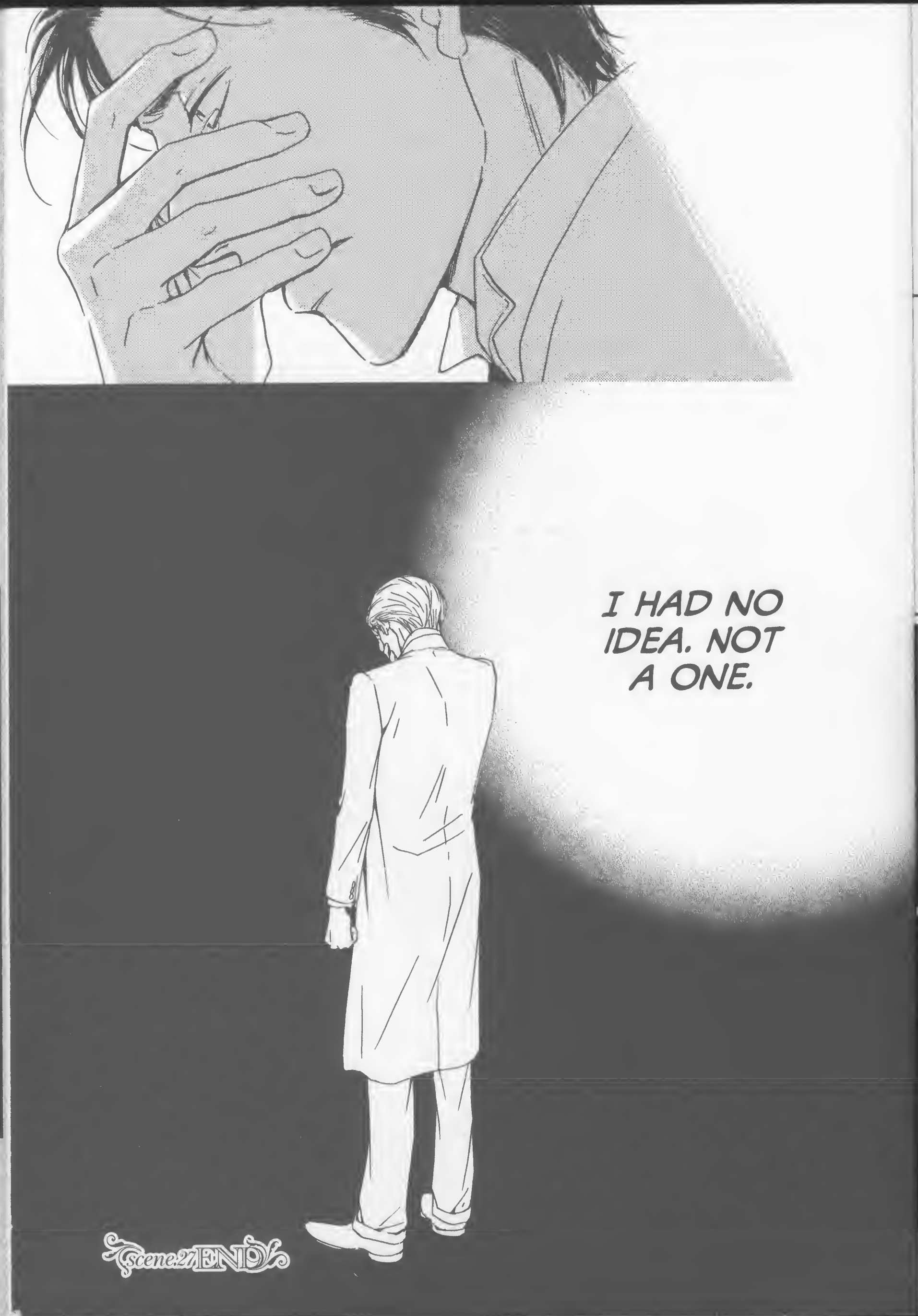

KATSURAGI.
...
MASTER SOICHIRO.
I'M RETURNING TO THE ISHIZAKI MAIN HOUSE.
BECAUSE I AM THE ISHIZAKI HEAD CLERK.
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING? ARE YOU JUST GOING TO LEAVE EVERYTHING TO KUZE BY HIMSELF?
HE'S STRONGER WITH YOU BY HIS SIDE.
...
KATSU-RAGI.
SIGH


COOL YOUR HEAD FIRST.
YOU TWO CAN TALK IT OUT LATER.
GIVE IT A LITTLE TIME.
MAYBE GET AWAY FROM TOKYO FOR A BIT.
EITHER WAY...
...IF YOU LOVE KUZE...
...DON'T RUN AWAY. STAND AND FACE HIM HONESTLY.
FWP


HEY!
KATSURAGI!
I'LL RETURN TO THE MANOR AHEAD OF YOU.
I FEEL AS IF I AM SUFFOCATING.
MADAM KAYOKO, MASTER SOICHIRO, THEY ONLY DO AS THEY PLEASE...
I HAD NO IDEA...
...I WAS THIS BRITTLE AND WEAK.


ACHING WITH MY OWN POWERLESSNESS EACH TIME HE CHASES ME, EACH TIMES HE PASSES ME.
EASILY BURDENED WITH SUCH TRIVIAL PREJUDICES.
I HAD NO IDEA.
TAK
AND...

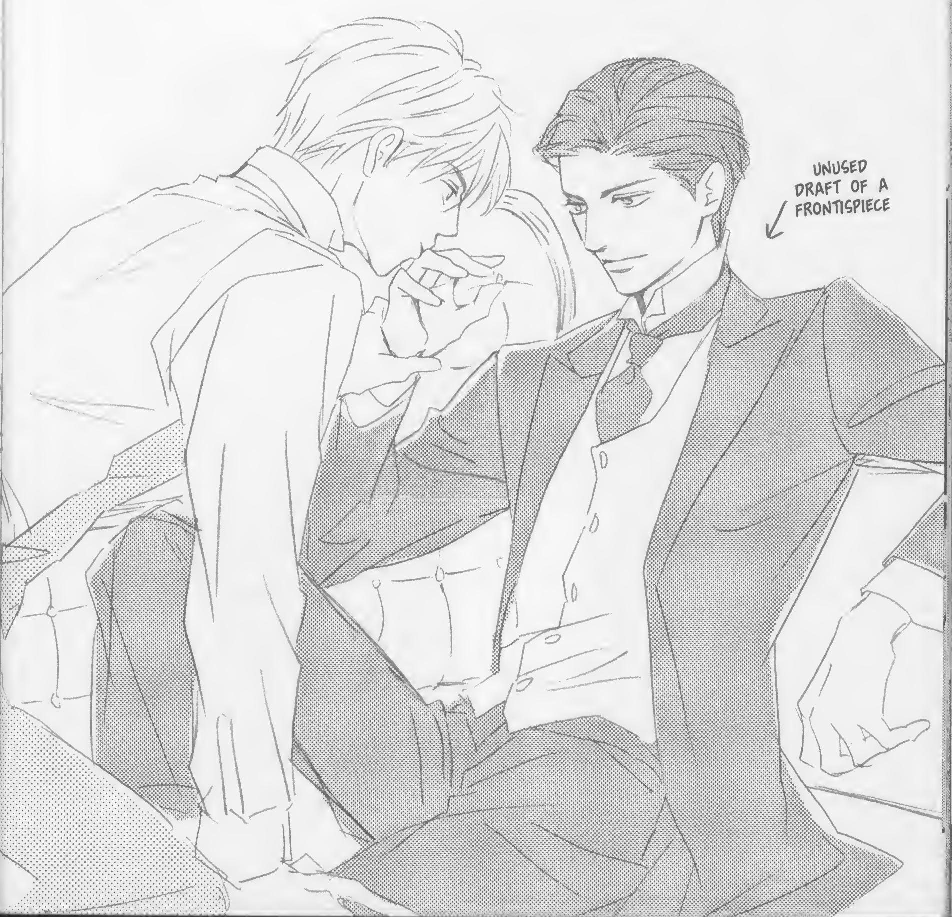

I LOVE YOU.
...
...TO DISCOVER THAT BY LOVING MASTER AKIHITO...
...BY TELLING HIM THAT I LOVE HIM...
...I WOULD END UP LOOKING THIS FOOLISH AND PATHETIC.
I...


I HAD NO IDEA. NOT A ONE.
Scene.27 END

THIS IS THE FIFTH VOLUME. ARRIVING AT THE FIFTH BOOK, I CAN FINALLY SEE THE END AND I BREATHE A SIGH OF RELIEF. I KNEW FROM THE BEGINNING THAT THERE WOULD BE EXTREMELY LITTLE IN THE WAY OF LOVE IN THIS VOLUME (NATURALLY, NO BEDROOM SCENES EITHER) (AND YET, THE BOOK IS STILL THIS THICK. SORRY...) (ON AND ON AT THE MORIYAMA ESTATE...), SO FOR EACH CHAPTER, I HAD THEM FLIRTING FOR NO REASON FOR THE FRONTISPIECES AT LEAST. FOR THE NEXT VOLUME, I WANT TO DO SOMETHING WITH THESE TWO, NOT JUST FOR THE FRONTISPIECES, BUT IN THE MAIN STORY TOO! SO I'D BE DELIGHTED IF YOU'D ALSO READ THE NEXT VOLUME. SEE YOU THEN!

JULY 2014
SHOKO HIDAKA

THIS TIME, I REALLY DID GIVE SO MANY PEOPLE SO MUCH TROUBLE. ESPECIALLY MY EDITOR... NEXT TIME, I'LL DO BETTER... SOMEHOW...


UNUSED DRAFT OF A FRONTISPIECE

“It’s Volume 5, and the whole thing is an evening party!”

About the Author

Shoko Hidaka’s works have been published in English, French and German. Her previously published English-language releases include *Restart* and *Not Enough Time*. Born on March 31st in Tokyo, she’s an Aries with blood type A.